

The National College Planning Summit

You Are Great! Make Sure Your Online Reputation Is Too!

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Carolynn Crabtree is the co-founder of Cornerstone Reputation, a research-based educational company committed to helping students manage their digital footprints with an eye towards college admissions and athletic recruiting.

- 1. We are excited to talk to you today and learn about how College Undergraduate Admissions Offices use Social Media in the Admissions Process. Tell us about the surveys you conducted? How did you gather this information?**
 - a. We contacted College Admissions Officers from 100 Top National & 100 Top Liberal Arts Colleges and Universities.

- 2. What did you find out? Who is searching?**
 - a. In 2012-2013 27% of Admissions Officers searched on-line
 - b. In 2013-2014 40% of Admissions Officers searched on-line.
 - c. We expect this trend to continue.

- 3. Where are they searching?**
 - a. Facebook, Twitter, Google Search – Admissions Officers are in the age range that they are most familiar with these 3 Social Media platforms.
 - b. Students can use Facebook and Twitter as places to really highlight their strengths and passions and how they interact with peers. Schools use this because it can indicate if the applicant will be a good roommate or classmate.

- 4. What motivates a search?**
 - a. Some schools have a policy that they will search when they are narrowing down the number of applicants they are considering.

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- b. Others search when they have a gut feeling, personal curiosity or to clarify something in the application. (award, leadership position or participation on a sports team)
 - c. Applications at highly competitive schools don't give enough insight into the applicant. Social Media is an unfiltered view of the student. Colleges are often judged by the actions of their students and Social Media can "warn" Admissions Officers if a student is likely to have a negative impact on the school's reputation.
 - d. Sometimes the student directs the Admissions Office to a particular location –for example, an online portfolio –but then other information can be discovered as the Admissions Officer searches for the reference site. (The applicant wants to direct the Admissions Officer to one YouTube video, but then as the Officer is searching, they may encounter other information about the applicant.)
 - e. Social Media gives a more three dimensional view of the applicant.
- 5. What is the impact of a search?**
- a. 44% found content that left a negative impression about the applicant.
 - b. 46% found content that positively impacted their impression of an applicant.
 - c. Social media can heavily boost or negatively impact the Admission Officers view of the applicant depending on how the students are engaging in online spaces.
- 6. More and more colleges are engaging directly on Facebook, Twitter & LinkedIn with students they have met at college fairs, campus tours or admissions interviews. What impact does this have on prospective students?**
- a. Students can express genuine interest in the school or a specific department in the college.
 - b. Colleges can get students on their radar early on - particularly if the student has outstanding online content.
- 7. What if the student mentions the college in an online post?**
- a. If a student mentions a college in an online post -you are putting yourself on the school's radar. Most colleges do keep track of Social Media mentions. Make sure it is positive and that you are comfortable with school representatives looking through all your Social Media posts.
 - b. Parents - make sure your online presence is positive too, if you are mentioning the college.
- 8. What content do the Admissions Officers find most positively impactful?**
- a. Well written article in local newspaper.
 - b. School article in the school newspaper.

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- c. Academic achievement.
- d. Anything the student has created online –such as building a website.
- e. Recognition of volunteer work on the organization’s website.
- f. Citation for athletic achievement on student’s personal blog.
- g. Any general display of talent, interest and passion - student made video, musical talent, published work, and displays of activism.
- h. Admissions Officers want to know that the student will embrace all the opportunities at their college –Social Media helps them see how engaged the student is at their own High School.

9. What content do university officials find negatively impactful?

- a. Crass and immature posts, poor grammar, excessive whining, negative comments about their current school or teachers, oversharing of private info, breach of User Term Agreement of Social Media- such as using a false name.
- b. Anything related to drinking, drugs, illegal activity or immoral activity.

10. Do colleges and universities have a Social Media policy?

- a. Some do and some don’t- many schools are starting to build policies based around this research.

11. Many college applications ask the student to submit supplemental material online – particularly blog posts, art portfolios or YouTube videos. What impact does this have for the prospective student?

- a. This can be a great tool to be using because it really creates a three-dimensional person. It is harder to say “no” to an actual person. However, once you point the Admission Officer to your online content - make sure the rest of the content is positive and authentic to who you are.

12. Are certain types of schools more likely to perform online searches?

- a. High ranking schools are definitely searching, but it is really happening at all types of schools.
- b. Colleges are looking to build the best incoming freshman class that they can.

13. What trends are you noticing as Social Media becomes more prevalent?

- a. Online searches are on the rise and students can use the internet to complement their application.

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14. If negative posts are deleted from the student's Facebook page, are these posts deleted everywhere or are these posts still out there for others to see?

- a. There is no such thing as "delete" because people can take a screen shot and copy and repost. Additionally, a lot of User Term Agreements say that once something has been posted, it no longer belongs to the person that posted it.
- b. Students delete content from their own site but do not look to see what they have posted on their peers' site. Treat your peers' pages as respectfully as your own. Often, the same Admission Officer is reviewing all the applications from the same High School, so they may see posts on each other's pages.
- c. Remove comments on your own pages that might be immature or rude. Admissions Officers form opinions of you based on your peers. It shows poor judgment.

15. Do other departments besides admissions look at Social Media?

- a. Art, Music, Athletics

16. Can you tell us about the surveys that you completed with the College Athletic Departments?

- a. We surveyed 300 Divisions 1, 2 & 3 colleges with high academics.

17. How many different sports did you survey and did it include men's and women's sports?

- a. 28 sports men's and woman's sport – all types of sports.
- b. What we found is that any student can put together an athletic portfolio by being proactive.

18. What did the survey results tell you?

- a. 83% of College Coaches conducted online research.
- b. 79% of College Coaches believe a strong and positive presence can give one recruit an advantage over another recruit.
- c. 97% of College Coaches said negative content can harm a recruit's prospect.

19. What are the most popular social media platforms?

- a. High School students should be active on the sites that coaches are looking at FB, Twitter, and Instagram.

20. What do they hope to find out about potential recruits?

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- a. Social Media also showcases your personality which is essential for a team's brand.
- b. If you are an athlete –think before you post. "Would I want my dream college coach discussing the content of that post with me one-on-one?"
- c. Student athletes need to ask –“Am I proud of this post?”

21. What does this trend mean for High SchoolAthletes?

- a. You can reach out to the coach and make it easy for them to evaluate you as an athlete.
- b. You get to pick the moments you are really shining to the coach.

22. Who is searching?

- a. Head coaches, staff members and current members of the team.
- b. 86% wanted to see highlight videos and 70% wanted to get a sense of character.

23. How do you describe “Internet Self-Awareness” for recruits?

- a. Pretend you are already a famous athlete and ask yourself this question. “How would I feel if the press got their hands on this post or comment and judged my whole team or athletic program by this post?”It is important for student athletes to think of themselves in the bigger picture.

24. What is the earliest point in the recruitment process that coaches start searching online for a recruit?

- a. 66% said as soon as they heard about the recruit.
- b. 38% when they are preparing to meet the recruit for the first time.
- c. 22% after they met the recruit.
- d. First initial moment can have a strong effect on them.

25. How important is the coach’s evaluation of the recruit’s character and what character traits play the largest role in the coach’s decision to pursue a recruit?

- a. The important character traits are maturity, enthusiasm and self-motivation.
- b. How the recruit posts about a big game, how much extra work they are putting in, their ability to applaud peers and opponents and how they reacted to a loss.
- c. This can showcase self-motivation, maturity and enthusiasm. Coaches don’t want to see whining about a loss.

26. Do the college coaches care about the academics of the recruits?

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- a. Coaches want athletes who perform well academically.
- b. They search online to research academic awards and academic achievement.
- c. Coaches have that on their radar when they are searching online.

27. What types of online content are likely to give a negative impression?

- a. 90% of coaches said inappropriate photos, lewd or illegal behavior has a negative impression.
- b. 83% said offensive content.
- c. 70% said aggressive language.
- d. Even poorly written posts or inappropriate content from a friend could turn the coach away from recruit.
- e. StudentAthletes need to realize that what they post has the potential to make or break their recruiting.

28. Do College Athletic Departments have any Social Media policies?

- a. Some schools have policies –many leave it up to the head coach.
- b. Social Media can be a branding opportunity for the college. They want athletes who will be a great extension of the school name out in the world.

29. How involved should parents be in the Social Media of their children?

- a. Kids are spending 5 hours a day online!
- b. Make sure kids understand how Social Media really works and how it stores information.
- c. Don't take a scare tactic approach. Talk about the internet as a platform to do interesting things.
- d. Social Media can be an opportunity to do something that makes them proud.

30. If a student is trying to improve their online presence, what should they do?

- a. The first thing is to change their Social Media settings so that every post they create will initially appear only to themselves. After they post it they can make it available to a greater audience: public or just friends - whichever audience it is most appropriate for.
- b. Limit settings so that they have to approve any comments made by peers on their own site.
- c. LinkedIn is open for 14 year olds and above. Students can add new skills and interests.
- d. Make sure your Social Media photo actually looks like you

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31. When should they improve their online presence?

- a. As soon as they receive the privilege of access to the internet they should learn how to use the internet.
- b. Make sure your online presence is who you are in real life. Highlight your interests and support your peers – show your involvement in your community.

32. Are you seeing trends moving from Facebook to Instagram and Snapchat? Where teens are going to evade parents? Are colleges going to these social media sites?

- a. Some colleges are trending towards Instagram & Snapchat.
- b. The important thing for students to realize is that any website that says you are anonymous – that is not true! Snapchat was hacked and data released.
- c. A screen shot can be copied and shared across a wide array of platforms.
- d. Texting is using the internet – personal texts can be copied and reposted.
- e. If you have something really personal to tell someone – make a phone call!

33. What final thoughts do you have for our listeners today?

- a. Your online reputation is not the most important piece of College Admissions, but it is something you have 100% control over.
- b. Understanding how the internet stores information and offers it up to people searching for you online is a life skill that you should learn.

34. How do you work with students?

- a. Visit our Resources & Blog Page on our website www.cornerstonereputation.com
- b. We help Students take control of their online identity.
- c. We offer a 2 hour “1-on-1 plan” for students to set up their accounts and gain a new sense of ownership over their online presence.
- d. We do Group Presentations for Schools with workshops. It is very valuable for the entire school to do this together because students play a role in each other’s online reputation. The school’s collective online community is more positive and impressive when students are working together.