

**ABSTRACT**

***Facebook in the Lives of Berkeley Undergraduates: From "Horror Story" to Research Findings***

**Gregg Thomson & David Radwin  
OSR, UC Berkeley**

Few recent developments in the lives of undergraduates have caused more concern and alarm among student affairs professionals than the rapid ubiquity of Facebook and the "cyber communities" it has produced on college campuses. Both the negative repercussions of Facebook usage (vulnerability to stalkers or sexual predators) and the disturbing "dark side" and narcissistic content of student postings have motivated this concern (Vito, Thompson, Alfred, & Skevakis, 2006). Many institutions, including Berkeley, have now instituted mandatory orientation programs to warn students about the "dangers" of Facebook. Despite the ubiquity of Facebook and the intense concern about it, however, there is almost no empirical research on its role in the lives of undergraduates. An exception is Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2006), a study that emphasizes the positive role of Facebook in the social and psychological integration of university students, but it is based on fewer than 300 survey responses. Our study is based on two thousand student responses to the "wildcard" module of the Berkeley spring 2006 University of California Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES). Preliminary results confirm the pervasiveness of Facebook among Berkeley undergraduates: four-fifths use Facebook and nearly half use it daily; for freshmen these figures are 91% and 62%, respectively. Our paper examines in detail student reports of intensity and importance of Facebook use and their relationship to student demographics and patterns of academic and social engagement. We also provide an analysis of open-ended responses to questions about the best and worst things that have happened as a result of using Facebook.