

It was the girl guaranteed to get into any school of her dreams, but nobody saw this coming. Ever since her freshman year of high school, Selena had worked like no other student in her grade. She not only received near perfect marks on her transcript, but her involvement in extracurricular activities, glowing reviews from teacher recommendations, and her commitment to lacrosse made her a prime candidate for any college or university. The admission counselor's words during her first college interview will forever haunt Selena when she relives the moment when all of her dedication to balancing school and sports reached a screeching halt. "I am sincerely sorry to inform you," he shakily announced, "but your profile picture on Facebook of you holding up a Solo cup with your drunk friends at a party is unacceptable for the prestigious admission into this school. I am sorry." Always looked at as the responsible one, Selena could never relay the truth to these two gentlemen before her. Had they known that she never drank alcohol when she went out and that holding the Solo cup in her profile picture was only to please her friends, her chance of admission would have been inevitable.

Like Selena, so many colleges have denied acceptance to students based on the negative image that they create online. Is it justified for colleges to take such actions and surf social media profiles when reviewing an applicant's chance of admission? The answer is absolutely yes. This is especially important to admission counselors since personal profiles on social media are an inside glimpse of who an individual is before ever stepping foot on their college campus. Some would argue that social media does not always depict the accurate attitudes and habits of individuals. Instead, profiles can be misleading, displaying posts and pictures that misrepresent

an individual's character. However, whether misleading or not, colleges have the right to access student online profiles, just like they are entitled to analyze one's transcript, personal record, and strength of character through teacher recommendations. This is because a clean social media profile is part of a student's responsibility, just like their grades, attendance, and behavior in class. According to the U.S. News and World Report, "Your Facebook shows how you want to be perceived. If you are doing stupid things on [it], that's how people will perceive you" (Lytle). If a student wishes to be accepted into a college so badly, they should recognize that admission counselors care about one's personal image throughout their years in high school, even before college ever commences.

Additionally, colleges want to ensure that all aspects of the students they admit meet the standards for the types of attitudes and behaviors that they wish to represent at their school. In other words, these schools would hate to admit students that would harm their overall reputation. However, it is universally known that many students create two profiles under the same name, one acting as the real them, and the other being a sometimes funny, made-up, inappropriate version of who they truly are. Even Waggoner, the Dean of Undergraduate Admissions at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas recognizes that "some students maintain two Facebook accounts" (New York Times). On the verge of adulthood though, students should be wiser and not succumb to the trap that many students around them fall into. No matter the size of the school, colleges are limited in that they can only admit a certain number of students per year. This means that they are looking for the most elite students to represent their college or university. With each college's reputation on the line, it is the responsibility of each student to be careful that fake profiles and inappropriate subject matter online does not wreck their chances of

getting into the school of their dreams. The last thing admission counselors want to do is admit a student that they know might cause trouble. Hindsight bias tells them that they knew this might have happened all along due to a student's online image of themselves.

Thinking beyond the scope of college, admission counselors reviewing one's online persona prepares a student for what they will face in the real world. This is because when they go to apply for jobs after graduation, employers care about whether a potential employee's social media profile is fitting for the job title. Some claim though that students have four years in college, and some have more, to correct their social media posts and pictures before they ever apply to these jobs. If students do not start early however, and do not treat a college acceptance as important as being hired for a job in the real world, admission counselors nationwide are doing students a disservice. This is because with technological increases in today's consumer world, the online representation of oneself is becoming even more significant to both admission counselors and job employers. Likewise, it is the job of colleges to set up students to be successful once they graduate. By analyzing student online profiles, they are ultimately helping these young adults in the long run. It is better for incoming college students to learn from rejection from a college that their personal image on social media is unacceptable before they are at risk for unemployment. These inadequate profiles could therefore affect their livelihood in a specific industry by coming back to hurt them.

To do their job, and to do their job properly, colleges undoubtedly have the right to deny a student admission to their college or university based on one's social media profile and persona. Not only do admission counselors get an inside scoop of an individual before their freshman year, but they want to ensure that once a student steps foot on their campus, their

behaviors and actions match up with the standards of that specific school. In the long run, these colleges are helping students understand rejection from a school before they are hit hard by the reality of being denied acceptance to a job position later in life. Christine Koenig, who received her master's degree at the North Central College in Naperville, Illinois, surveyed 144 colleges in a 150-mile radius around Chicago. From the 43 replies, "67 percent of the school admitted to Googling a prospective student, and 86 percent admitted to researching students' social media sites". These colleges not only hope to protect their "reputations", but they want "to avoid potential bad apples from spoiling their brand". In the eyes of various colleges, Selena, and numerous high school graduates nationwide, face rejection each year due to inappropriate social media content. Who knew that one Solo cup could lead to the creation of so many "bad apples" (Post-Tribune)?

Work Cited

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