USING SOCIAL MEDIA FOR COLLABORATIONS ABOUT INDUSTRY NEWS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Background

Social media use has surged in the past decade. Facebook has 900 million global users (Wall Street Journal, 2012). Recognizing that many of these 900 million users are potential customers (a search on Facebook in May 2012 revealed that there are 11.5 million US Facebook users that "like" wine, beer, or spirits), the wine industry has embraced social media (Vinography, 2012). Wineries are using social media as a tool to reach consumers and as a tool to reveal their brand quality and personality (The Tribune, 2011). In a survey of 118 of Texas' 181 bonded wineries, nearly 80% of them were actively engaged in social media, with the majority not only using social media for customer connections, but also using social media for establishing industry connections and finding suppliers (Lau et. al, 2011). A survey by ABLE Social Media Marketing revealed that 94% of American wineries are on Facebook and 73% are on twitter (ABLE Social Media Marketing, 2012). They further found that 47% of wineries said that Facebook helps them generate sales and 72% sell wine on their websites.

Bradley and McDonald indicate that knowledge management is what company management tells employees they need to know. In higher education faculty practice knowledge management by telling the students what they need to know. Social media is a method peers use to show connections the content they think is important. Bradley and McDonald believe that organizations can gain value from social media through mass collaboration (Bradley and McDonald, 2011). Since industry, and in particular the wine industry, is using social media to enhance interactions between professionals and with consumers, how is higher education preparing their graduates to use social media in their careers? Have students pursuing wine-related higher education used social media to enhance their learning and prepare them for industry?

A 2011 survey by Pearson Learning among 1,920 professors of higher education, found that almost two-thirds of faculty are using some form of social media for their courses (Moran et. al., 2011). The purpose of this research is to examine how social media is being used to enhance learning among students at California Polytechnic State University. Further, this research aims to identify if there are differences in the attitudes and behaviors of wine and viticulture students compared to other students related to social media and industry information. The wine and viticulture students examined in this research are pursuing degrees in both enology and viticulture.

Methodology

This research used a survey instrument to conduct a personal interview of 602 students at Cal Poly in the fall of 2011 and winter of 2012. Information concerning the students' attitudes and behaviors about industry news for their courses and social media were examined. In addition, students were shown a concept of new social media tool, ValuePulse, for use to communicate about industry news with other students and professors.

This study used positioning research to examine the attributes students desire in a social media tool that can be used to communicate industry news and information.

Positioning research examines the factors that impact a consumer's perception about a product (Ries 2000). The characteristics of a product that consumers want when they purchase or use it are examined by desirability ratings (Clancy 1994). The most desirable characteristics are used in the development of a new product and in the development of a positioning statement, used to explain the product to the consumers. Applying positioning research to the concept of social media usage in the classroom, the factors, attributes and benefits, that motivate students to use one social media tool versus another for course communications about industry information was examined in the study.

Since this research examined social media platforms, characteristics concerning ease of use, ability to send articles, news and blogs between students and faculty, connections with industry, rating of information and comments, including resumes on the site, and access to private conversations were examined. Respondents were asked the following question: *"The following is a list of features students and faculty may desire when choosing a tool for communicating about information for coursework. Please indicate how desirable each feature is to you. Where, 5=Extremely Desirable, 4=Very Desirable, 3=Somewhat Desirable, 2=Slightly Desirable, and 1=Not at all Desirable."*

In addition to using positioning research, this research used simulated test marketing research to examine student interest in using a new social news network for higher education, ValuePulse, for their coursework. Simulated test marketing research is a methodology that has been used by the marketing community since the 1960s to forecast purchase interest in new products and new positionings for existing products (Clancy 2006). Comparisons between forecasted sales and actual sales have been used to validate the sales forecasts from simulated test marketing research methodology. In-market sales for 250 cases reported by the BASES simulated test marketing model have been within 10% of predicted sales, while in-market sales generated by products tested using the DESIGNATOR simulated test marketing system have been within 9% (Clancy 1994).

The simulated test marketing used in this research examined the likelihood that students would recommend a new social news network to professors and other students for collaboration about course material. Students were exposed to a description of the new social media tool and then an attitudinal interest question was used to evaluate their recommendation likelihood. A Juster 11-point scale was used to examine the recommendation likelihood. Dr. Thomas Juster of the U.S. Department of Commerce created the Juster eleven-point scale that couples word meanings with probability estimates to enhance serious thinking. Through empirical experimentation, marketing researchers have discovered that the Juster scale predicts real world behavior more effectively than other purchase interest alternatives, especially for mixed and high involvement decisions (Clancy 2006). Table 1 shows the purchase interest question used in this research.

Table 1: Juster Scale

How likely would you be to recommend ValuePulse to other students, faculty or clubs for use in their communications about important information?
Certain will recommend (99 in 100 chances)
Almost certain will recommend (90 chances in 100)
Very probable will recommend (80 chances in 100)
Probably will recommend (70 chances in 100)
Good possibility will recommend (60 chances in 100)
Fairly good possibility will recommend (50 chances in 100)
Fair possibility will recommend (40 chances in 100)
Some possibility will recommend (30 chances in 100)
Slight possibility will recommend (20 chances in 100)
Very slight possibility will recommend (10 chances in 100)
No chance you will recommend (0 chances in 100)

Research Sample

      The sample includes 602 students from all majors at Cal Poly. Relative to the student population at the University, there were a higher proportion of students studying business and liberal arts and lower proportion of architecture and engineering students that completed the survey (Figure 1). Males are 56% of the Cal Poly student population and this sample has 52% males (Cal Poly Fact Book Fall 2011).

Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Major
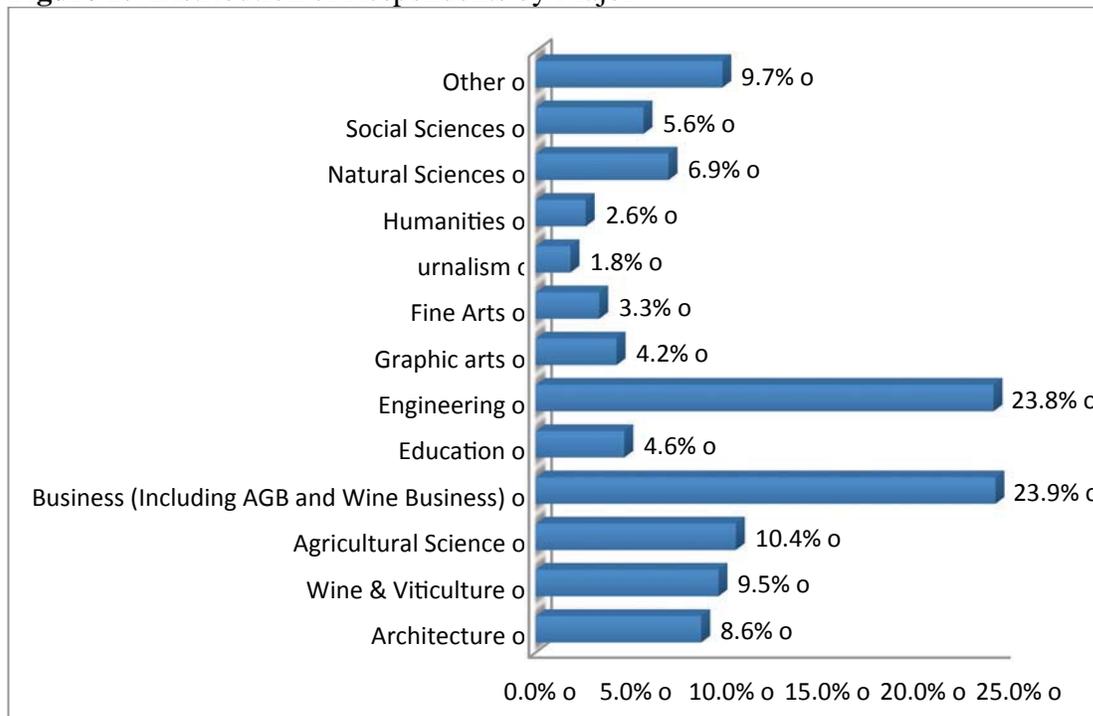
This research aims to examine if there are differences between the wine and viticulture students and others. Therefore, the student's majors were grouped into the following six degree areas: architecture, wine and viticulture sciences, other agricultural sciences, business, engineering, and other areas of study. The business students included students from both the business and agriculture colleges. They studied general business, agribusiness, and wine business. Table 2 for shows the survey response breakdown by degree area.

Table 2: Students by Degree Area (N= 602)

Architecture	Enology and Viticulture	Other Ag Science	Business	Engineering	Other
6.30%	7.30%	8.50%	21.80%	22.30%	66.10%

Communication About Course Material Using Social Media Tools

Most of the students used either Blackboard or Moodle/Poly Learn in a class to communicate with other students and faculty. YouTube was used by over half and Facebook by 43% of the students for course information (Table 3). Google Docs were used by almost two thirds of students, yet only half of the enology and viticulture students used Google Docs (Table 4).

Table 3: Social Media Used in a Class with Students or Faculty

Social Media Used	Percent
google docs	63.0%
YouTube	58.0%
facebook	42.5%
other social media	10.0%
google reader	8.6%
google+	7.0%
twitter	5.1%

Table 4: Percentage Use Google Docs

Architecture	Enology and Viticulture	Other Ag Science	Business	Engineering	Other
71.1%	50.0%	62.7%	67.2%	69.4%	57.4%

Chi square test of independence P = 0.065* Sig at .10 level

Faculty and students of all majors communicated using email links of articles and emails of articles (see Table 5). However, business students used wikis and blogs more. Enology and viticulture students were average users of wikis and blogs, while agricultural science students were less likely to use wikis (Table 6). Most students from all majors comment at least once a week (Table 7).

Almost two-thirds of the students surveyed indicated that it was extremely or very important to stay up to date about industry news (Table 8). However, about 75% of enology and viticulture majors found this extremely or very important. The wine

industry is dynamic with changes in weather, yields, packaging, pricing, laws, and tastes impacting the industry. The wine students surveyed seemed to understand the importance of staying up to date. The architecture students had similar attitudes toward industry news. Engineering students were the least concerned about staying up to date about current events in their industry.

Table 5: Other Interactions in Class with Students and Faculty

Interactions	Percent
emails of links to articles	80.7%
emails of articles	76.0%
blogs	27.0%
wikis	25.6%
other social media tools	7.4%

Table 6: Percentage Use Blogs and Wikis

Architecture	Enology and Viticulture	Other Ag Science	Business	Engineering	Other
Blogs[1]					
21.1%	27.3%	21.6%	35.9%	17.2%	26.0%
Wikis[2]					
13.2%	27.3%	13.7%	35.1%	22.4%	22.5%

Chi square test of independence [1]$P = 0.022$** [2]$P = 0.011$** Sig at .05 level

Table 7: Comment Frequency on a Social Websites

Commenting	Percent
At least once a day	39.9%
Between once and six times a week	23.7%
About once a week	12.2%
Between once a week and once ever two weeks	5.5%
Less than once every two weeks	8.2%
Never	10.5%

Table 8. Importance for Students to be Up to Date With Current Events and News in their Area of Study

	Architecture	Enology and Viticulture	Ag Science	Business	Engineering	Other
Extremely	26.3%	27.9%	15.7%	20.8%	12.7%	19.6%
Very	44.7%	48.8%	56.9%	42.3%	41.0%	40.7%
Somewhat	26.3%	18.6%	27.5%	33.1%	34.3%	32.8%
Not very	2.6%	2.3%	0.0%	3.8%	8.2%	6.4%
Not at all	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	3.7%	50.0%

Chi square test of independence $P = 0.052$* Sig at .10 level

Almost 40% of the students surveyed indicated that it is extremely or very important for students to write about current events and news in their area of study as a means to improving their written communication skills (Table 9). The architecture and enology and viticulture students were more likely to think that it was extremely or very important to write about current events in their industry. Both groups of students perceived the importance of current events and they also believed it is important to be able to write about them. Perhaps the fragmentation of the wine market and large number of small wineries and brands drives this belief for the enology and viticulture students. They realize that they will represent their wine and must be able to communicate with consumers about it. Further, the presence of wineries on Facebook and Twitter require the ability to write about the brand.
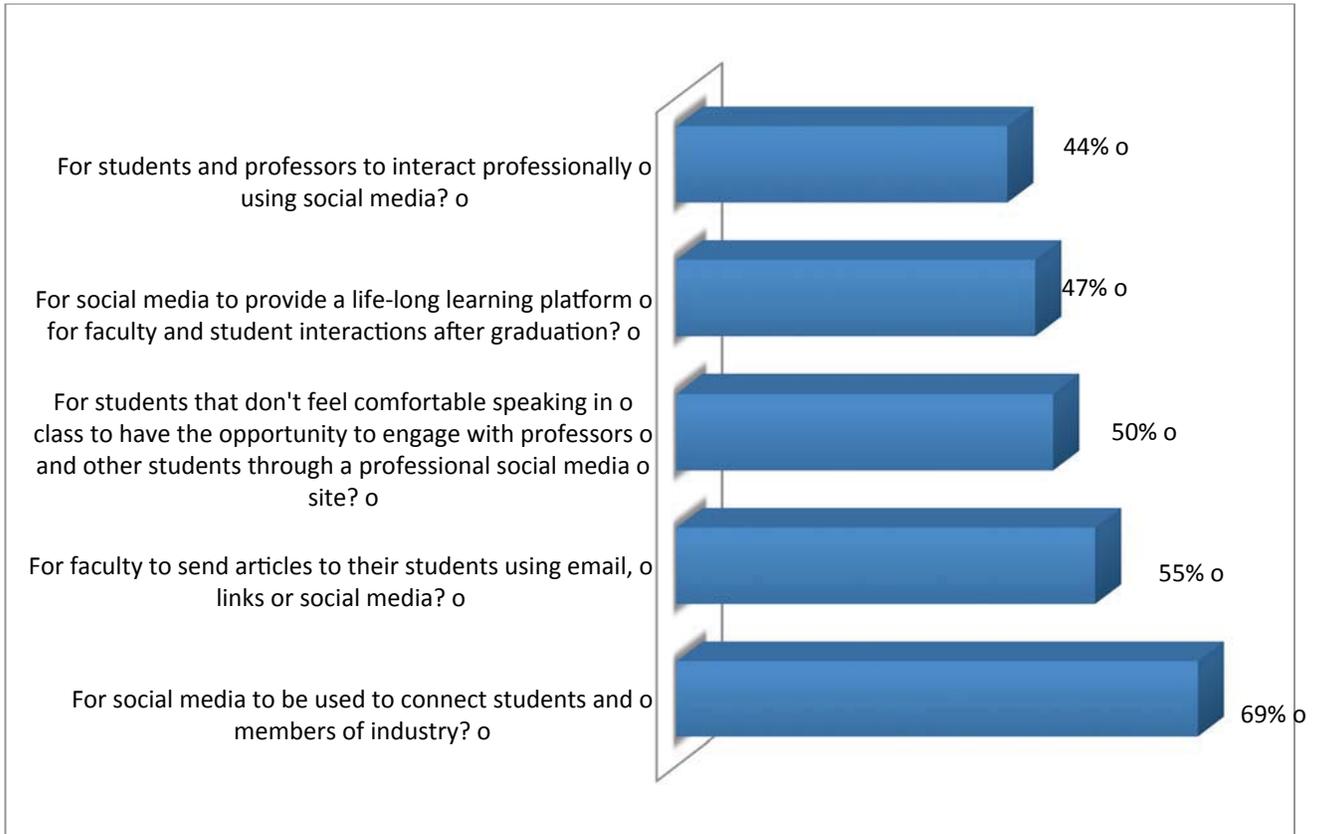
Table 9. Importance for Students to Write About Current Events and News

	Architecture	Enology and Viticulture	Ag Science	Business	Engineering	Other
Extremely	15.8%	18.6%	7.8%	9.2%	3.8%	13.3%
Very	31.6%	30.2%	31.4%	32.3%	23.3%	30.5%
Somewhat	42.1%	34.9%	51.0%	45.4%	37.6%	33.0%
Not very	10.5%	14.0%	7.8%	11.5%	29.3%	19.7%
Not at all	0.0%	2.3%	2.0%	1.5%	6.0%	3.4%

Chi square test of independence P = 0.002** Sig at .05 level

Most students thought it was extremely or very important to use social media to connect students with industry members and for faculty to send articles to their students using email, links, or social media (Figure 2). Approximately half of the students surveyed believed it was extremely or very important for students that don't feel comfortable speaking in class to have the opportunity to engage with professors and other students through a professional social media site. Almost half believe it is extremely or very important for social media to provide a life-long learning platform for faculty and student interactions.

Figure 2: Extremely or Very Important Reasons to Use Social Media

Reason	Percentage
For students and professors to interact professionally using social media?	44%
For social media to provide a life-long learning platform for faculty and student interactions after graduation?	47%
For students that don't feel comfortable speaking in class to have the opportunity to engage with professors and other students through a professional social media site?	50%
For faculty to send articles to their students using email, links or social media?	55%
For social media to be used to connect students and members of industry?	69%

Over three-fourths of students believed that there needs to be a more efficient way for students and faculty to communicate about relevant information concerning their course materials (Figure 3). Students were dissatisfied with existing communication tools for course material.

Figure 3: Agreement: There needs to be a more efficient way for students and faculty to communicate about relevant information concerning their course materials.
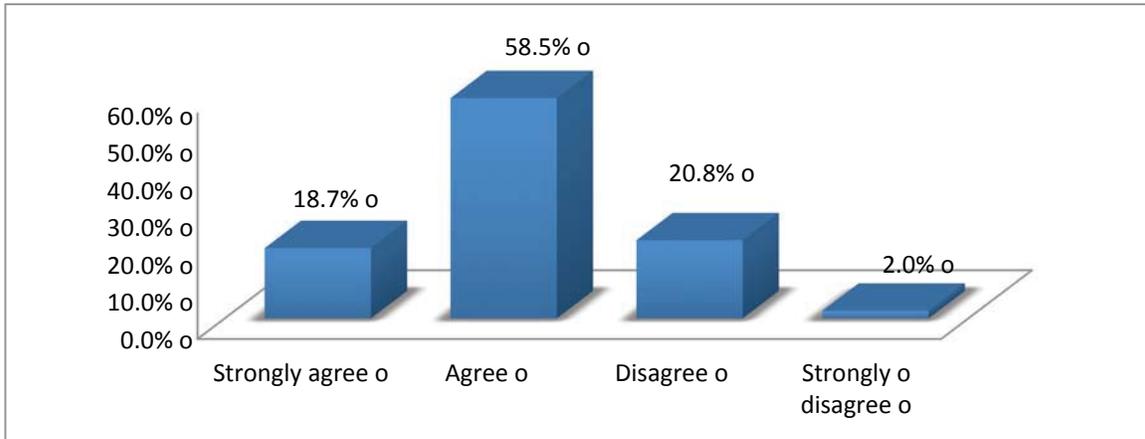
Students were also asked the following question to identify the features they desire for communication about course information:

> *The following is the list of features students and faculty may desire when choosing a tool for communicating about information for coursework.* Please indicate how desirable each feature is to you: 5 = Extremely Desirable; 4 = Very Desirable; 3 = Somewhat Desirable; 2 = Slightly Desirable; 1 = Not At All Desirable."

The enology and viticulture students agreed with the average student on the five most desirable attributes for a tool for communicating about coursework:

1. Allows interactions between students, faculty, clubs, and professionals in area of study
2. Used by professionals in your area of study to discuss relevant information
3. Allows students and faculty to share, discuss, and upload files
4. Has the ability to have private discussions about course or group work
5. Ability to easily send articles, news and blogs between faculty and students

Table 10. Features for Choosing a Tool for Communicating about Coursework

Features for Communicating about Coursework	Mean N=353	Percent Extremely/Very
Allows interactions between students, faculty, clubs, and professionals in area of study	3.9	71%
Is used by professionals in your area of study to discuss relevant information	3.9	71%
Allows students and faculty to share, discuss, and upload files	3.8	68%
Has the ability to have private discussions about course or group work	3.8	66%
Ability to easily send articles, news and blogs between faculty and students	3.8	64%
Includes an option to upload your resume	3.7	61%
Has an easily usable library of news and blog feeds	3.6	57%
Improves your written communication skills	3.6	57%
Facilitates discussions about information between students and the faculty through comments and blogs	3.5	49%
Allows users to rate the value of articles and other shared information	3.2	32%
Allows students to rate the comments of others	2.8	26%

Students were shown a concept of a new social news network for communicating with faculty and other students about industry news, ValuePulse. ValuePulse is a social news network that provides one-click access to a virtual library of over 1,000 news feeds and discussions. It enables students and faculty to efficiently communicate about industry news for their courses with both news and discussions in one location. ValuePulse eliminates clicking in and out of different news sources and messy email chains. The concept that students saw is shown in Figure 4.

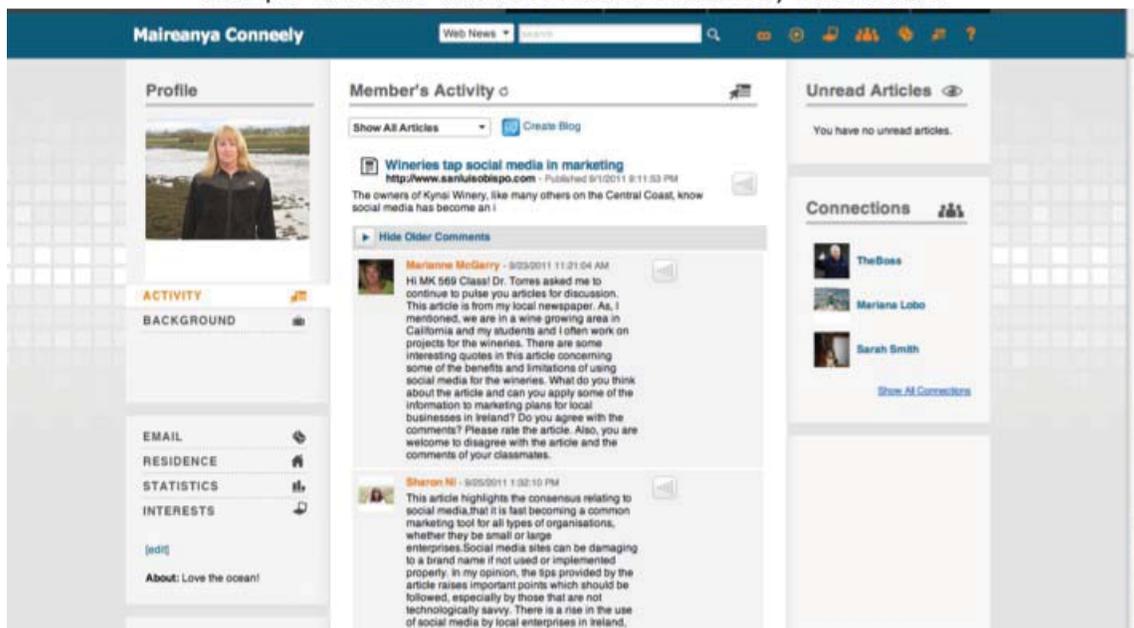**Figure 4**: ValuePulse Concept Shown to Survey Respondents

Almost half, 45%, of all students indicated that it is an excellent or very good idea for faculty to use ValuePulse to communicate about course material. Another 43% thought it was a somewhat good idea (Table 11). However, the enology and viticulture students were significantly more likely to think it was an excellent of very good idea (Figure 5). Two-thirds of the enology and viticulture students thought ValuePulse was an excellent or very good idea for communications about important information. Perhaps they were more engaged by the faculty and student conversation about wineries using social media shown in the concept.

Table 11: How Good of an Idea It Is for Faculty Members and Students to Use ValuePulse to Communicate About the Important Information in their Courses

	Percent
Excellent	9.5%
Very good	35.6%
Somewhat good	43.4%
Not very good	8.8%
Poor	2.8%

Figure 5: Percent that Thought It Was an Excellent/Very Good Idea for Faculty Members and Students to Use ValuePulse to Communicate
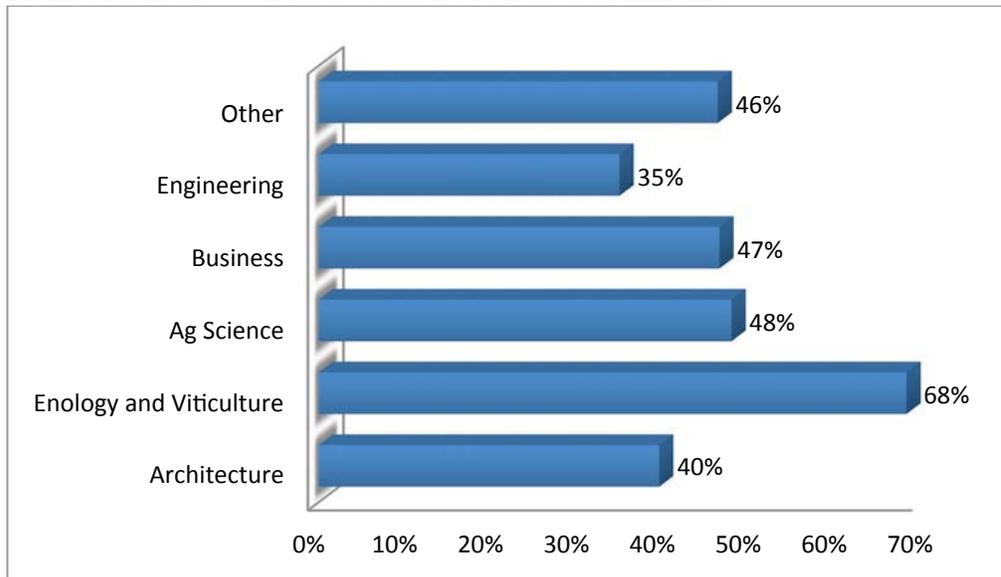
Chi square test of independence P = 0.088* Sig at .10 level

Similarly, half of the students would probably recommend ValuePulse to other students and professors (Table 12). The enology and viticulture students were more than twice as likely than all student groups, except business, to be at least very probable to recommend ValuePulse to other students and faculty (Figure 6). Again, the enology and viticulture students appear to understand the importance of efficient communication of industry news between faculty, industry, and students.

Table 12: Likelihood Would Recommend ValuePulse to Other Students, Faculty or Clubs for use in their Communications About Important Information

Likelihood	Percent
Certain will recommend (99 in 100 chances)	2.1%
Almost certain will recommend (90 chances in 100)	5.9%
Very probable will recommend (80 chances in 100)	11.6%
Probably will recommend (70 chances in 100)	16.3%
Good possibility will recommend (60 chances in 100)	14.8%
Fairly good possibility will recommend (50 chances in 100)	9.2%
Fair possibility will recommend (40 chances in 100)	6.2%
Some possibility will recommend (30 chances in 100)	8.3%
Slight possibility will recommend (20 chances in 100)	8.6%
Very slight possibility will recommend (10 chances in 100)	9.5%
No chance you will recommend (0 chances in 100)	7.4%

Figure 6: Percent Very Probable to Certain Will Recommend ValuePulse to Other Students Faculty, or Clubs
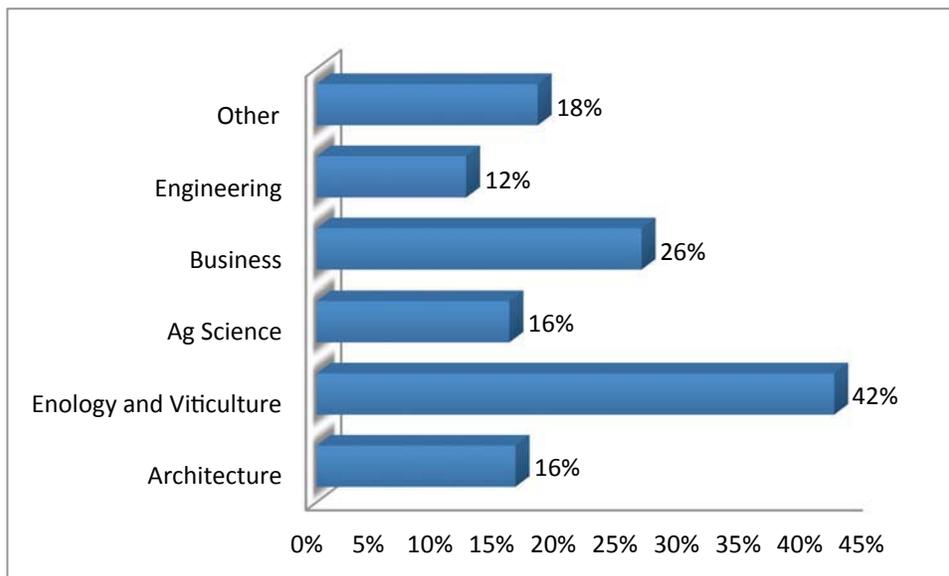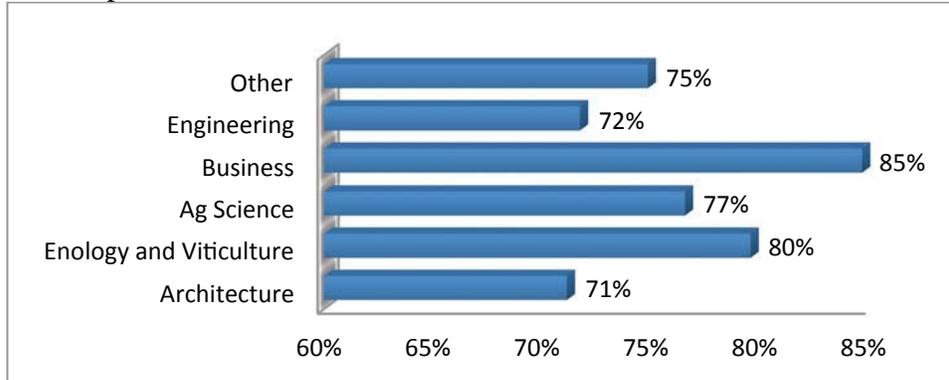

Chi square test of independence P = 0.009** Sig at .05 level

After seeing the ValuePulse concept, 77% of the students agreed that their written communication skills would likely improve by using ValuePulse (Table 13). Business and enology and viticulture students were most likely to perceive that their written communication skills would improve using ValuePulse (Figure 7).

Table 13: Agreement that Writing About Articles on ValuePulse Each Week Will Improve Written Communication Skills

Agreement	Percent
Strongly agree	5.6%
Agree	70.9%
Disagree	19.3%
Strongly disagree	4.3%

Figure 7: Strongly Agree/ Agree that Writing About Articles on ValuePulse Each Week Will Improve Students' Written Communication Skills

Chi square test of independence P = 0.065* Sig at .10 level

Students were asked to indicate which social media platforms were appropriate for student and faculty interactions. After seeing the ValuePulse concept, ValuePulse was second to Google Docs with a half of the students indicating that was an appropriate form of interaction (Table 14). Only 15% of all students and 21% of students that had used facebook for course communications indicated it was appropriate. All students agreed on the appropriateness of ValuePulse for interactions between students and faculty.

Table 14: Platforms Appropriate for Student and Faculty Coursework Interactions

| Platform	Percent Believe Appropriate	Percent Believe Appropriate/ Used Facebook
twitter	7%	8%
google+	9%	11%
google reader	15%	14%
facebook	15%	21%
Wikis	23%	24%
Blogs	32%	34%
YouTube	34%	34%
ValuePulse	51%	49%
google docs	63%	62%

Further, students were asked: *"How appropriate do you believe it is to use the following for discussions between students and faculty about important information*

concerning coursework: Facebook, LinkedIn, and ValuePulse? Two thirds of the students thought that ValuePulse was extremely or very appropriate (Table 15). Only a third thought LinkedIn was extremely or very appropriate. Further, only 6% of the total sample indicated that Facebook was extremely or very appropriate to use for discussions between faculty and students about important information concerning coursework. However, the architecture, engineering, enology and viticulture and business students were less likely to agree that Facebook was extremely or very appropriate (Figure 8). In addition, the engineering and enology and viticulture students were less likely to agree that LinkedIn was extremely or very appropriate for discussions between faculty and students about important information concerning coursework.

Table 15: Extremely/Very Appropriate to Use for Discussions Between Faculty and Students

Platform	Extremely/Very	Extremely/Very/Used Facebook
facebook	6%	8%
LinkedIn	36%	38%
ValuePulse	62%	64%

Figure 8: Extremely/Very Appropriate to Use for Discussions Between Faculty and Students
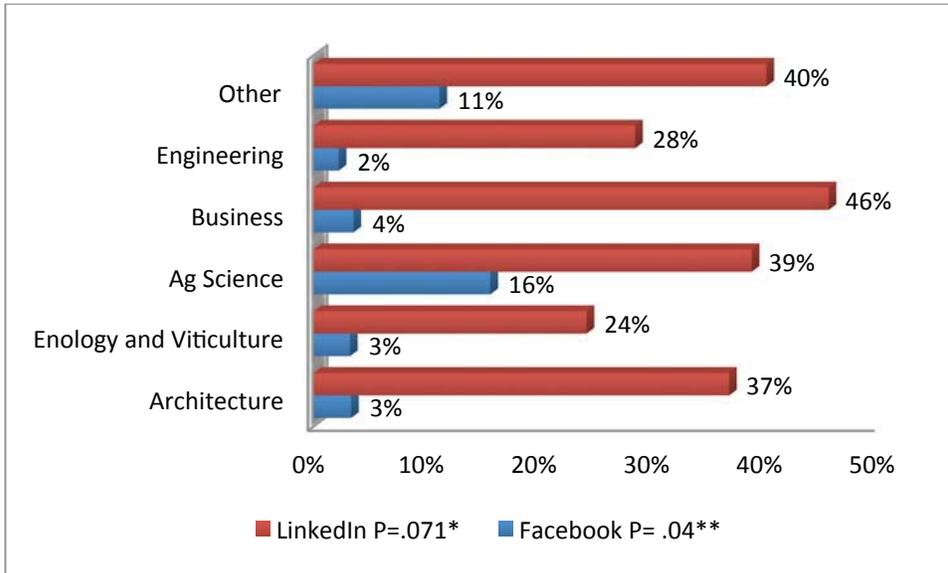
Chi square test of independence

Summary and Conclusions

Compared to blogs, wikis, and other social media tools, emails of links to articles and emails of articles were the most frequently used form of interaction with faculty or other students. Both YouTube and Google Docs were used by over half of the students in their classes. However, enology and viticulture students were less likely to have used Google Docs. All students are active on the internet, forty percent of students comment on a website at least once a day. Two-thirds of students indicated that it was extremely or

very important to be up to date with current events and news in their area of study. Three-fourths of enology and viticulture majors found this extremely or very important. The wine students surveyed appear to be keenly aware of the importance of external events on their industry. Half of the wine and viticulture and architecture students indicated it was extremely or very important to write about current events and news in their area of study to improve their written communication skills. Only 40 percent the entire sample indicated that it was important to write about current events in their area of study.

Over three-fourths of students indicated a need for a more efficient way for students and faculty to communicate about relevant information concerning their course material. The students were shown a concept for a new social network called ValuePulse. Almost half of the students indicated that using ValuePulse to communicate with faculty members about the important information in their courses was an excellent or very good idea and two-thirds of the wine and viticulture students thought it was an excellent or very good idea. A fifth of all students were 80% or more likely to recommend ValuePulse, while 42% of the wine and viticulture students were 80% or more likely to recommend ValuePulse to other students, faculty, and clubs. The concept showed a conversation between students and faculty about using social media. The conversation may have been more relevant to the enology and viticulture student and increased their interest in using ValuePulse. Since the wine and viticulture students indicated that it was more important for them to discuss and write about industry news, it is not surprising that they were more likely to react positively to the social network that allows them to read about, discuss, and write about their industry.

When examining the appropriateness of existing social networks for student and faculty interactions about coursework, only 14% indicated Facebook was appropriate. The wine and viticulture students were more negative concerning Facebook. Only 4.5% of wine and viticulture students indicated it was appropriate. Twitter was not acceptable to 94% of the students for interactions with faculty about coursework. Interestingly, while over half of the students indicated that YouTube was used in their courses, only a third thought it was an appropriate tool for faculty interactions. The new social network, ValuePulse, was included in the list of appropriate platforms for interactions concerning coursework with faculty. Half of the students indicated ValuePulse was appropriate compared to 14% for Facebook and 6% for twitter.

Students were also asked to rate the level of appropriateness of using Facebook, ValuePulse and LinkedIn for discussions between faculty and students about important information concerning coursework. The only majors that indicated it was extremely appropriate to use Facebook were engineering and students that fell into the "other" category. Only 6.3% of the total student sample indicated that Facebook was extremely or very appropriate and only 3.3% of the wine and viticulture students indicated Facebook was extremely or very appropriate. LinkedIn was perceived to be extremely or very appropriate for 36% of the students for discussions between faculty and students about important information concerning coursework. However, only 28% of the engineering students indicated that LinkedIn was extremely or very appropriate for discussions about coursework. ValuePulse was considered to be extremely or very appropriate among two-thirds of the students for interactions with faculty about coursework. Such a network may solve the need for more efficient communication between students and faculty.

This research shows that there is a need for more efficient communication between students and faculty concerning their coursework. Students are not satisfied with existing platforms for communicating with their faculty about coursework. Students are receptive to new social networks that will facilitate communication with faculty and serve as a connection point for industry news and current events and this is particularly true for students in wine and viticulture programs. Enology and viticulture students are especially receptive to a social news platform that enhances their knowledge of the industry.

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