INTERNET SAFETY TIPS

Have you added anyone from AC to your Facebook yet? Are you constantly tweeting? With the rapid growth in the popularity of online communities and blogs there are some important facts to consider when venturing out in to the virtual world.

Realize that information posted on line is "public"

More people than you realize have access to these sites. Once you post something there is no requirement or expectation of privacy. Does the site you are visiting sell your information to companies? Can you block   individuals' access to your information? What are the default settings for your account? Do these settings automatically protect your information or leave it open for everyone to see? Be sure to consult the terms of use for your site of choice to find out just who has access to your information.

Never post sensitive personal information

You may want all of your new friends to have your cell phone number but do you want some random friend of a friend's creepy roommate to also have it? Think about identity theft as well. The reality is that it is on the rise. You don't want to make it easy for someone to steal your information, do you? It's never a good idea to post information such as your room, campus box or phone number online.

Think about how you wish to represent yourself when you post

This goes back to point number one. Theoretically potential employers, graduate and professional schools, and internship directors could look you up and see everything that you've posted. What do you want these sites to say about you? If you post any information such as resumes on sites like Monster.com, be sure to keep the information current. If you post photos be sure they show a side of you that you are ready for the world to see.

Remember that you must follow the campus' guidelines for network usage at all times

Be sure to familiarize yourself with the college's policies on responsible network use.
Violation of these policies could result in the loss of Internet access and further disciplinary action.

Realize that harassment is not okay, even online

The college takes charges of harassment very seriously and this includes instances of online harassment. Just because the college does not run these sites does not mean that harassing messages put on them aren't subject to college policy or in some instances even criminal charges. If you feel that you're being harassed online let your RA, campus police or another campus official know. For more information about the college's policies on harassment consult the Student Handbook. Additionally, many sites have their own policies against harassment. Be sure to consult the site's terms of use for further information.

Confidential information should remain confidential

Many students have on campus jobs and through the course of these jobs can come across some interesting information. But what happens in the office should stay in the office. Posting confidential information online can get you fired and could possibly lead to disciplinary action, so do not do it.

Remember that while online communities can be great things, there's still no substitute for face to face communication

These sites are great ways to meet people with similar interests and can be avenues for creative expression. However, they should not take the place of human contact. If you have a problem with your roommate do not air everything out on your message board of choice. Talk to them face to face or speak with your RA about it.

Think before you post

This might be the most important tip of all. When visiting these sites use some common sense. Writing your room, phone number and class schedule on the wall for everyone to see is not a good idea in the real world so it is probably not the best of ideas to put this information online. Threatening to bash your neighbors face in is not smart in the real world so don't do it online. Would you want your mother to see a picture of you after a long night out partying? Stop, think and then type.