

# Students research Facebook

By Katrina Wehr and Katie Derkits  
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Instead of spending hours procrastinating on Facebook, Julia Woolley and Anthony Limperos decided to research the social networking site.

The two Penn State graduate students investigated the effects the website may have had on the outcome of the 2008 presidential elections.

Their research showed that Facebook groups that supported Barack Obama were more active, boasting more than 10,000 members on average. Groups devoted to Republican challenger John McCain contained fewer than 1,400 members on average, according to a Penn State press release.

Additionally, Woolley said the low number of comments related to the ages and ethnic backgrounds of the candidates on the group pages surprised her.

"We can't draw many conclusions because we only analyzed the content," Woolley said, "but the research suggests a relationship between the groups and the outcome of the race."

Limperos said he became interested in conducting the research after he noticed a large amount of Obama and McCain groups on Facebook.

"We are Facebook users, and we saw a ton of groups," he said.

"The research took a lot of effort."

The content analysis of the research was particularly involved, Woolley said.

The night before the elections, she and Limperos archived and coded different Facebook pages. They focused on group titles, pictures, recent news and in what way the candidate was portrayed in the group. Woolley said.

"It was extremely involved and time-consuming," she said.

Because the 2008 elections saw the second-largest 18- to 35-year-old voter turnout in history, the research shows that social media has the potential to be a powerful tool in future elections, Limperos said.

"You see a lot of candidates harnessing the power of social networking because they can connect with something people use everyday," he said.

Natalie Knepper didn't join any political Facebook groups.

But she said she did become informed about the candidates through the social networking site.

"It's convenient and allows people to reach out to each other and talk about things openly," Knepper (senior-media studies) said.

Kourtney Smith said she believes social networking will continue to play a role in politics, but Facebook alone was not responsible for the hype surrounding the 2008 election.

"It does play a role because politicians are targeting young people," Smith (junior-journalism and Asian studies) said.

While Limperos said he has no plans to research the upcoming mid-term elections, he would like to see future studies conducted on social media websites like Twitter.

"This is something that candidates will want to take advantage of in the future," he said.

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## HONOR GUARD



Katie Silvis/Colegian

Members of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) stand guard at the Lion Shrine Thursday night. Students have been guarding the shrine over Homecoming weekend since 1949, after an attack before a Villanova game.

# Blood donors bleed blue and white

By Jennifer Lewis  
FOR THE COLLEGIAN

For many Penn Staters, the month of October means Halloween, Homecoming and football games.

And this October, students can show spirit for their team in one more way — by donating blood.

The Penn State Student Red Cross Club's October blood drive is the Bleed Blue Campaign, an effort to increase donation among Penn State students.

Penn State Donor Resources Field Representative Wendi Keeler said the effort is part of a campaign with Penn State Sports, which will include ads in football programs, advertisement at the games and many other things.

"We are really trying to play off of the Penn State alumni and student pride," Keeler said.

Presenting donors at any October blood drive on campus could be automatically entered to win the Bleed Blue Donor of the Game promotion

for each home game this season. The winner of Donor of the Game will receive prizes such as T-shirts, sideline visits, pre-game hospitality passes, video board recognition and tickets to a home football game.

Winners will also be entered to win the grand prize drawing, which includes four tickets, airfare, and hotel accommodations for the 2010-2011 Penn State Bowl Game, Keeler said.

Student Red Cross Club President Rino Sato said every campaign's main goal is to get more people to donate blood.

"We always try to use incentives, such as football, to get more people to come out and donate," Sato (senior-premedicine) said.

Sato said this is the first year the club has done anything like this — she hopes it will bring more donors who want to give blood.

"Hopefully it will bring more people out to help because people at Penn State love football," Sato said.

Student Red Cross Club Vice President Julie Agee (senior-marketing) said the goal of the Bleed Blue campaign is to collect 310 units of blood in October.

Keeler said Bleed Blue is part of all October campus blood drives — it's a great way to show support for the Nittany Lions.

"Especially if they don't have tickets to the football game, this could be a great way for them to be able to attend," she said.

Keeler said the mission of the Red Cross at Penn State is to always make sure blood is available to the hospitals when necessary for patients in need.

Another important goal is to try to educate the Penn State community about donor habits, and to make students donors for life by the time they graduate.

"If you need blood, you'll get it, period. It doesn't matter what your background is," Keeler said. "So on the reverse side, we feel like you should be helping the community."

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