

FACULTY **F**OCUS

Special Report

Twitter in Higher Education 2010: Usage Habits and Trends of Today's College Faculty

September 2010

Executive Summary

This report represents the second annual survey on Twitter usage and trends among college faculty. This year's survey, like that conducted in 2009, sought answers to some of the fundamental questions regarding faculty members' familiarity, perception, and experience with the micro-blogging technology, as well as whether they expect their Twitter use to increase or decrease in the future. We also examined year-to-year comparisons to see how the Twitter landscape has changed during the past 12 months.

The 2010 *Faculty Focus* survey of nearly 1,400 higher education professionals found that more than a third (35.2 percent) of the 1,372 respondents who completed the survey in July-August 2010 use Twitter in some capacity. That's up from 30.7 percent in 2009. Meanwhile, the percentage of educators who never used Twitter decreased from 56.4 percent in 2009 to 47.9 percent in 2010. The remaining 16.9 percentage consists of those who tried Twitter, but stopped using it—an increase from 12.9 percent in 2009.

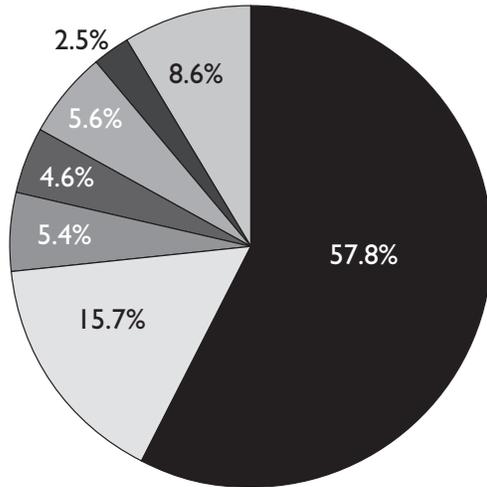
Of those who currently use Twitter, the most common activities include “to share information with peers” and “as a real-time news source.” Instructional uses, such as “to communicate with students” and “as a learning tool in the classroom” are less popular, although both activities saw increases over the previous year. Meanwhile, a number of non-users expressed concerns that Twitter creates poor writing skills and could be yet another classroom distraction. Many also noted that very few of their students use Twitter. Finally, a new trend that emerged this year centered on the belief that many feel they already have too many places to post messages or check for student questions/comments. As one professor put it, “I have no interest in adding yet another communication tool to my overloaded life.”

In terms of future use, just over half (56.8 percent) of current Twitter users say they expect to increase their use during the coming academic year. Only 2.5 percent say their Twitter use will likely decrease, and 40.7 percent say it will stay about the same.

This 22-page report gives a breakdown of each survey question, including a sampling of the comments provided by the respondents. The comments allowed faculty to further explain how they are using Twitter, why they stopped, or why they have no interest in using it at all.

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

More than 60 percent of the people who completed this year's survey teach at the college level with 57.8 percent identifying themselves as professors or instructors, and another 5.4 percent as online instructors specifically. Academic leaders made up 15.7 percent of the respondents, while the rest include instructional designers (5.6 percent), faculty development (4.5 percent), and library services (2.5 percent). Another 8.6 percent selected "Other" and this included IT, academic advisor, teaching assistants, and support services.



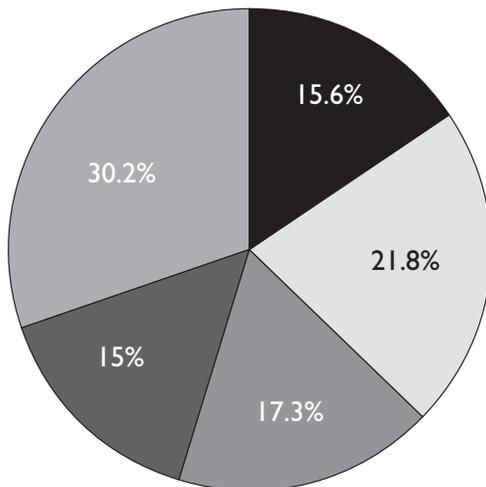
WHAT IS YOUR ROLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

Professor/instructor: 57.8%
 Academic Leader: 15.7%
 Online Instructor: 5.4%
 Faculty Development: 4.5%
 Instructional Design: 5.6%
 Library Services: 2.5%
 Other: 8.6%

(Total who answered the question: 1,385)

HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU WORKED IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

A new question this year asked, 'How many years have you worked in higher education?' the most popular response, at 30.2 percent, was more than 20 years. Next was 6-10 years (21.8 percent), followed by 11-15 years (17.3 percent), less than five years (15.6 percent), and 16-20 years (15 percent).



HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU WORKED IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

Less than 5 years: 15.6%
 6-10 years: 21.8%
 11-15 years: 17.3%
 16-20 years: 15.0%
 More than 20 years: 30.2%

(Total who answered the question: 1,374)

HOW FAMILIAR ARE YOU WITH TWITTER?

In its simplest terms, Twitter is a free micro-blogging service that allows people to send and receive messages of 140 characters or less. To say the company has seen explosive growth in the past two years is an understatement. In 2007 Twitter users, as a whole, made about 5,000 tweets a day. By 2008 the

number had increased to 300,000 tweets per day, before growing to 2.5 million per day in January 2009. Just one year later, in January 2010, the figure jumped to 50 million tweets per day.

The growth of Twitter has also spawned a number of third-party applications developed to help users manage their Twitter activity. Some of the more popular ones are TweetDeck, HootSuite, and Seesmic. For shortening URL's, critical given the limited character count for each tweet, bit.ly and tiny URL are commonly used.

As in 2009, this year's survey asked respondents to gauge how familiar they are with Twitter. In both years, the top response was "somewhat familiar" with 35.2 percent in 2010 and 38.7 percent in 2009. However, the responses that saw the biggest changes were the ones that dealt with each end of the spectrum: those who said they are "not at all familiar" with Twitter dropped by 5 percentage points (from 20.4 to 15.4 percent) while those who said they are "extremely familiar" with Twitter increased by nearly the same amount (from 9.0 to 13.8 percent).

	2010	2009
Not at all familiar	15.4%	20.4%
Somewhat familiar	35.2%	38.7%
Familiar	19.8%	19.0%
Very familiar	15.9%	12.9%
Extremely familiar	13.8%	9.0%
Number of Responses	1,372	1,962

DO YOU USE TWITTER?

As we learned from last year's survey, people have very strong feelings when it comes to Twitter. Some see it as a platform for people to make mind numbing pronouncements on the minutia of everyday life (e.g. I could really use some coffee) or a place to follow celebrities like Oprah (4 million followers) or Ashton Kutcher (5.5 million followers). In short, they consider Twitter a forum for the self-absorbed and a colossal waste of time.

Yet, Twitter continues to see remarkable growth. At the company's first developer conference in April 2010, it announced a startling slew of statistics, including:

- Twitter has 105,779,710 registered users
- 300,000 new users sign up per day
- Approximately 60 percent of them are coming from outside the U.S
- Twitter receives 180 million unique visitors per month
- 60 percent of all tweets come from third-party applications
- There are 600 million search queries on Twitter per day
- 37 percent of active Twitter users use their phone to tweet

In what the *Washington Post* called "a nod to the significance of the social networking site," the U.S. Library of Congress announced in April 2010 it will keep a digital archive of every public tweet that has been broadcast on Twitter since its inception in March 2006.

In higher education, many of the early adopters to Twitter were professionals involved in marketing, admissions and alumni relations. Today a growing number of professors are using Twitter as a way to connect with like-minded peers from around the country (or world), as a new teaching tool to keep students engaged, or as a real-time news source.

Yet despite the increasing number of college instructors actively using Twitter in some form or fashion, this survey showed that there is also a large group of educators who believe, very strongly in some instances, that Twitter has no place in higher education.

Quite a few respondents expressed a willingness to give Twitter a try, but say they aren't sure where to start. Others are taking a "wait and see" approach to make sure it's not just a passing fad that will be replaced with something else as soon as they learn how to use it.

In the year-to-year comparison, the *Faculty Focus* survey saw an increase in the percentage of educators currently using Twitter, from 30.7 percent in 2009 to 35.2 percent in 2010; and a decrease in those who've never used Twitter, from 56.4 percent in 2009 to 47.9 percent in 2010. Meanwhile, the percentage of those who've tried Twitter but stopped using it increased from 12.9 percent in 2009 to 16.9 percent in 2010.

Do you use Twitter?

	2010	2009
Yes, I use it	35.2%	30.7%
I tried it, but no longer use it	16.9%	12.9%
No, I've never used it	47.9%	56.4%
Number of Responses	1,372	1,958

MORE THAN A THIRD OF FACULTY ARE ON TWITTER

Of the 1,372 who answered the question "Do you use Twitter?" more than one-third (35.2 percent) say they are currently using the micro-blogging service. While significantly less than the 47.9 percent who say they've never used Twitter, consider this: in June 2009 Twitter's footprint reached 10.7 percent of all active Internet users, according to market-research firm Nielsen Company, so one could conclude the adoption rate among college faculty is relatively high.

Now that we know faculty are using Twitter, let's explore how they are using it. In last year's survey "collaborating with colleagues" was one of the most popular activities with 37.4 percent saying they used Twitter for that activity "occasionally" or "frequently." In 2010, based on feedback received, we modified the description of that option to "To share information with peers" and a total of 71.2 percent say they do so "occasionally" or "frequently" via Twitter. The second most popular activity, which was a new option this year, was to use Twitter "as a real-time news source." A total of 70.4 percent say they do so "occasionally" or "frequently."

A complete breakdown of their responses, including comparison for 2009 and 2010, is in the following table:

How frequently do you use Twitter for the following activities:

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Occasionally	Frequently
To share information with peers	2010	6.5%	6.9%	15.4%	22.1%	49.1%
	2009	24.6%	17.9%	20.0%	15.6%	21.8%
To communicate with students	2010	33.9%	20.0%	14.1%	16.8%	15.1%
	2009	42.4%	17.7%	14.0%	12.5%	13.4%
As a learning tool in the classroom	2010	44.2%	21.2%	11.0%	13.9%	9.7%
	2009	59.3%	13.2%	11.0%	9.4%	7.2%
As a real-time news source	2010	5.9%	8.7%	15.0%	18.6%	51.8%
	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

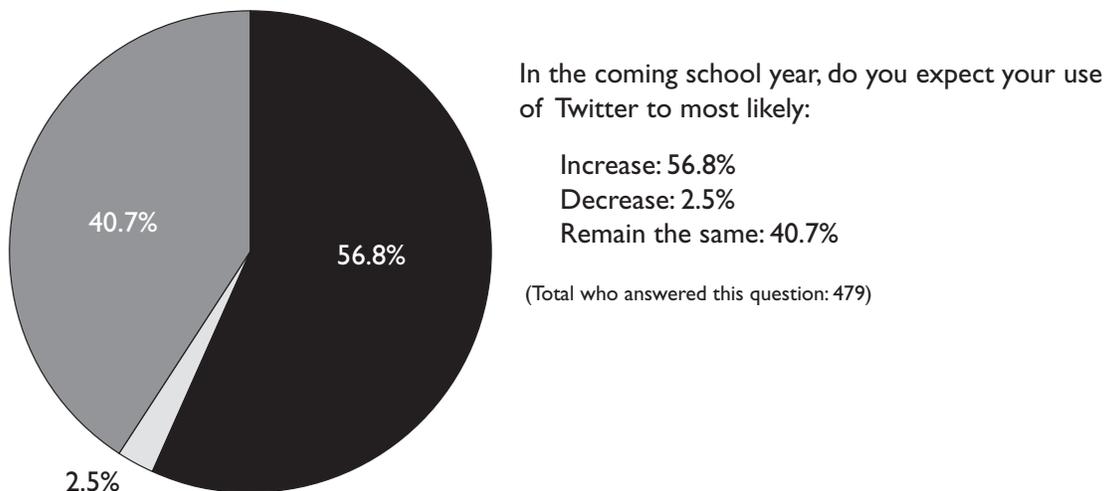
Of the 479 who answered the question in 2010, more than 64 added comments to further explain their position. Here are some of their comments on how they're currently using Twitter:

- *For personal use only, although I have suggested it to instructors as a means of sharing information.*
- *To follow along with colleague's thoughts and Ideas*
- *I didn't try using Twitter with my students this past academic year since I was under the impression few if any of them used it. However, I'm thinking about using HootCourse this fall in my teaching, which has a big Twitter component.*
- *Used Twitter in class for the first time in Spring 2010.*
- *I just opened my account. I have no idea what to do with it my our reference librarian said, "Baby steps..."*
- *I most frequently use Twitter to promote campus events, as well as events in the community that relate to my discipline.*
- *As a search engine*
- *To publicize journal posts*
- *Networking; professional development (such as #learnchat); hyperlocal updates (linking to neighbors, neighborhood news, connecting with neighborhood resources)*
- *To get information on topics specifically related to team-based learning and interprofessional education*
- *I teach a segment in my marketing class on Twitter & student use is a requirement*
- *To stay in touch with my PLN.*
- *I am considering using it this fall with students, in and out of class.*
- *To follow businesses I'm interested in.*
- *Expand knowledge on particular issues*
- *As a tool for improving sentence structure, concise word usage. Notices for assignment changes. Welcoming a new student. Cohort information/assignments/notices.*
- *Keeping up to date with interests of some key people in the sector; following a few interesting people and orgs to get a feel for trends, which isn't news exactly. To support, and be supported by peers and others*
- *To demonstrate the pros and cons of good communication*
- *To look for expertise on very specific questions.*
- *I have punched in some stuff just for the hell of it recently (while school is out and I am less busy) but no one important (i.e. students) really sees it. I do "follow" NPR and therefore get news headlines there sometimes. However, I also follow NPR on Facebook and find that Facebook is better because in Facebook I can click on the headline and read or listen to more about it if I wish.*
- *Primarily use it to keep up with topics/issues of interest, including teaching. I consider this a little different than as a news source. I've heard the term personal learning network, which sounds appropriate.*
- *I've used it to find resources for classroom instruction, but never directly in the classroom.*
- *Announcements and as research tool*
- *I am going to introduce Twitter (hoot course) in a couple of classes I teach in the Fall.*

TWITTER USAGE EXPECTED TO INCREASE

The next question to current Twitter users asked if they expect their use of the micro-blogging service to increase, decrease or remain the same during this coming academic year (Fall 2010). More than half (56.8 percent) foresee themselves using Twitter more frequently, 40.7 expect to use Twitter about same as they are now, and just 2.5 percent plan to use Twitter less often.

By comparison, in last year's survey, nearly three-fourths (71.8 percent) anticipated their Twitter use would increase. Only 3.2 percent thought they would use Twitter less and 25 percent said it would remain the same.



ACTIVE TWEETERS COMMENT ON CURRENT AND FUTURE USES

The final question to Twitter users was an optional, open-ended question that asked for additional comments or anecdotes about the role of Twitter in higher education. A number of faculty commented that they use Twitter for professional development and have built a strong personal learning network (PLN) on Twitter. And while some have found success in using it in the classroom, others noted resistance from students who prefer Facebook to Twitter.

Here are just some of the 154 comments provided by survey respondents, broken down by general categories.

Twitter as a networking and professional development tool

- *Greatest learning tool since Socrates spoke... No I'm not kidding. The access to industry leaders and educators I have developed is second to none!*
- *Have created a great PLN through Twitter*
- *It is an excellent tool for sharing resources.*
- *Twitter has been a tremendously useful tool for me in connecting with other professors, discovering new sources and new information, teaching students about some of the dynamics of not just Twitter but real-time information sharing, and for building and continuing relationships made in real life.*
- *It's great to be able to send a quick thought to everyone and receive reactions and connect with so many people at once--family, friends, and friends-to-be.*

- *Invaluable as professional development tool & I highly recommend it for that. Also good way for faculty to establish personal brand as experts. Builds strong connections between people who have never met--could be a great way to establish relationships before coming into the classroom and then maintain those, if students adopt Twitter.*
- *Twitter is a fantastic LEARNING tool. I'm sure it can be used for teaching, but even then, it's more of a place to share information and LEARN from others. You develop PLNs (professional learning networks) across a variety of interests and specialties. This is the true value of Twitter. You can also participate in tagged chats by topics. This is helpful for learning, but this feature could also be a teaching tool as well.*
- *I love Twitter and find it indispensable for keeping up with what's happening in my profession, and for connecting with colleagues. I answered "frequently" to the question about using Twitter to communicate with students, but I should point out that, in my case, it is mostly a one-way conversation. I am a college librarian and tweet in the persona of our library mascot (a statue of a cat), who tweets about books, interesting web sites, study tips, etc. I follow a few students (which is a fascinating window into their world) and they follow me back, and occasionally I answer a reference question via Twitter, but I never send an unsolicited tweet to a student. Classroom teachers might feel more comfortable with doing that, but I've made a policy for myself not to go there. In my observation, students have been slow to catch on to Twitter anyway (they're still in love with Facebook), but I'm beginning to see a few of them trickle over.*
- *I have been able to obtain information shared in conferences that I am unable to attend, even to the point that I asked a question and someone attending asked the question for me. Additionally, I have made strong contacts with faculty and administrators at other institutions.*
- *Finding the right people to follow is critical.*
- *My PLN is on Twitter, and I encourage students to follow professionals, conferences, etc. in their fields*
- *I believe that Twitter plays a very important role in my PLN, and gives me a great way to share information! @drmmatom*
- *I find Twitter can be a useful academic tool. It provides immediate access to a world of ideas regarding the implementation of technology into pre-service teacher education.*
- *I find it is useful and quick and diverse way to engage with academic and HE learning and teaching ideas and colleagues. It stimulates my thinking and fits my v hectic lifestyle. I use it most for keeping me sharp and engaged and amused, thus stimulating the work I do with faculty development and in exploring student experience. It has been v important for supporting me in my work and in my current leadership role*
- *I love Twitter as a personal learning tool. I am experimenting extensively and I think it holds promise, especially towards facilitating certain learning processes, like communication and collaboration outside of the classroom.*
- *Twitter has been the most effective, efficient, and cheapest professional development I have had in years.*
- *I've reached more people and have had more exposure as an academic tweeting and blogging about higher ed than I have ever with my more tradition research and publishing.*
- *I participate in #educhat and #mathchat, get great ideas and support from colleagues around the world.*
- *I present Prof Dev sessions on using Twitter as a teaching tool and as a professional resource. I use it in ALL college classes & have learned more from my PLN than from many other sources of traditional learning.*

- *Twitter is a great tool for developing a personal learning network with educators from around the world. I collect ideas and resources to share weekly with colleagues at my college. I also find out about free webinars and resources that I would not be aware of without Twitter. A great spot for PD!*

Twitter in the classroom: benefits and challenges

- *Most of my students are still new to Twitter, so integrating into a course management system (via widget) is important.*
- *Very pertinent to communication with students, so I will be using it more, although for myself it is way too much information*
- *Dedicated hashtags for courses could allow students to tweet out questions and answers, and allow profs to see where students are having the most trouble with material*
- *I would use it to communicate with students if any of them were on Twitter, but they aren't, not even after the campus bookstore offered crazy discounts for Twitterers.*
- *I would like to incorporate Twitter in the classroom, but not sure how to do it*
- *The ability to communicate and share information with such a wide audience is unmatched. Instructors not using it, even just to tap into the info flow, are doing a disservice to their students.*
- *I've found Twitter useful for increasing students' time thinking about course related content through tweeting supplemental content links and for some very limited student interaction. I'm hoping to encourage more student input.*
- *Twitter is a useful educational tool, administrators need to reward faculty that push their teaching forward using innovative methods, otherwise other faculty see no value in expending time and energy on yet another thing to do.*
- *We have used Twitter and word clouds as a sort of text-based clicker device to great success. We are building our own tool that will do the same thing, authenticated.*
- *Used in a Principles of Management course, Twitter is an excellent opportunity to supplement course materials with current developments by retweet related news.*
- *I integrate Twitter fully in all my online courses. I require students to do the same as well.*
- *Some of my Twitter experiences went into this piece about using Twitter to learn about teaching from one's peers: <http://blogs.vanderbilt.edu/cft/?p=509>.*
- *I incorporate Twitter on my web site so students do not have to join. I find this very useful for providing students with quick updates.*
- *Great for managing class projects*
- *Gave some exam tid-bits and hints on Twitter which were helpful in preparing for the exam*
- *I have used Twitter assignments three times so far in my classes. The students are very resistant to using it and comment that they don't want strangers reading their posts or trying to tweet them. They don't seem to get the benefits of networking this way. I'm looking at ways to change this perception-perhaps by bringing in local business people who use Twitter (and other social media) to discuss usefulness.*
- *Twitter is useful for getting the word out quickly to my students. I use it frequently when late for class, or if I post an update to an assignment. But I also find that to use it for personal reasons, I need a separate account.*
- *Students are generally surprised at the amount of information available on Twitter*

- *I've tried to incorporate Twitter into my program without any success. I am going to work on way to make it work, as I see the value in using it.*
- *I take a lot of MBA students overseas and Twitter is a great way to provide them with links about news in the destinations, e.g., www.Twitter.com/koreality and www.Twitter.com/singaporeality. I also teach a technology management course and use Twitter to enhance classroom discussion - students can comment without raising their hands in class.*
- *I use this to communicate with students in a timely fashion. I have found that students don't check their email all that often, but they do interact via SMS. The character limitation does limit the nature of the conversation, however. I teach chemistry*
- *Twitter is a great way to provide timely information to my students and allows for quick follow up actions. Gives students a sense of immediacy -- so important to this generation.*
- *I love reading tweets by who I follow but I rarely tweet myself. I'd like to figure out how to incorporate into my curriculum in a meaningful way.*
- *I'm quite happy with Twitter and what its ability to facilitate dissemination of information to groups in real time, but getting students to adopt it has been the biggest drawback. Unless it's required (which I'm not in favor of doing), students gravitate towards the class Facebook group, but not both that and the Twitter feed. Personally, I find Twitter more useful because of its limited functionality. It's not the time-drain that Facebook is.*
- *Online instruction makes it a little challenging to utilize Twitter as a learning tool in the classroom. However, my field is higher education and I recommend Twitter as a professional development resource!*
- *It's a good way to mass communicate. If you have a classroom and everyone is a follower on Twitter then you can disperse small messages such as assignment due dates or classroom changes and/or much more.*
- *I tend to use it to keep abreast of my peers' work/reading/opinions/ideas etc. I would like to use it more in my teaching but as ever it's a case of balancing the appropriate with the realistic; Twitter is sometimes the best tool for the job but not everyone understands it or wants to sign up.*
- *It's a good way to get a lot of voices heard in a relatively short period of time. It seems non-threatening to students. Because of the informal nature of Twitter, we can make errors in spelling and grammar as we share our thoughts and no one gets upset - not even the teacher.*
- *I use Twitter in place of course email messages to students. I shoot off quick snippets of information, instead of huge emails. It's also a quick way to let them know where I am, I'm an online instructor so this helps me to establish presence in my classroom. I also use it to follow leaders in my college, as well as leaders in the field of allied health. I'm able to stay in tuned with what's going on in the world of health care, even though I'm no longer working in health care. I find this a key piece of communication technology for my online classroom. I post the widget on my course home page, so students don't need to follow me. They can read the tweets right in the course.*
- *We use Twitter - as well as Facebook - as a tool to communicate with students. Both have helped us improve our services, support retention, extend recruitment and engage students.*
- *My main goal by using Twitter in my classes is to increase student engagement by providing them with a tool that allows them to post and read comments and questions at any time and using the technology that is most convenient to them (computer, cell phone, etc.).*

- *I have always been very enthusiastic about using technology in teaching and I have been a leader in online teaching in my state. I use many different technologies in my teaching. As far as I can see, Twitter is pretty much a waste of time and is not easily applied to teaching.*
- *Student groups post a tweet with results from their in-class conversations; these can be searched (through a hashtag) and posted on the screen immediately for the whole class.*
- *I've found that even though some students are resistant at first to another technology, Twitter helps in building community in the classroom. Highly valuable teaching tool.*
- *Twitter is a wonderful way to keep up with the latest research, developments and thoughts on almost any topics. Last semester, I required one of my classes to use Twitter. Some got it, but many did not. They could not get past the stereotype that Twitter is about broadcasting what you had for lunch.*
- *Most undergrad students use Twitter in my classes because they are given a mark for participation. Grad students are more Twitter savvy and use it both for personal and professional purposes (Facebook is still king for my grads and undergrads)*
- *I know of one archaeology professor that started using it to increase classroom participation by allowing students to tweet friends from the field about what they were doing and finding.*
- *I maintain two Twitter accounts just for my classes. I use Twitter to bring real-world situations to their attention, in the same way I might read a newspaper article for a face to face class. The advantage over the newspaper is that (1) I can update it as many times as I want per week; (2) I include hyperlinks so students can get more in-depth information on the topic; and (3) it's more permanent than an announcement in class, and students can go back to any tweet at any time to learn more about it.*

Other assorted observations about Twitter

- *I've found a number of faculty who say proudly "I use Twitter," but when their streams are examined, there's not a lot of activity (or it's fairly weak) IMO.*
- *I think that we are allowing Twitter and other social software to limit our ability to actually converse. My undergrads have difficulty speaking in front of a group and forming a concrete argument for or against a topic. I have used Twitter to try and help this but have decided that what they really need to do is GET FACE TO FACE and look each other in the eye and take and support their position. Twitter is too limited for thoughtful, in depth comments. It supports the "30 seconds" of fame concept and not deep and critical thinking needed in decision making.*
- *I'm trying to come up with a regular schedule of the types of things I'll post--every Monday an announcement about our regular community nights on Mondays; every Tuesday and Thursday a helpful link to other resources on web; every Wednesday an announcement about what subject we're cover in the class that night; every Friday a prayer for the weekend or something like that. (As far as I know, I am the only prof at our school who uses Twitter at all.)*
- *Most people have no idea what to do with Twitter, and most need a secondary site to manage their twitstreams and schedule tweets. I use Hootsuite for that.*
- *My students do not know I have a Twitter account and I intend to keep it that way. I've been teaching for four years and I do not use social media to engage or communicate with my students.*
- *Excellent platform for creating a specialized news feed*

- *I am intent on learning more about Twitter. I want to be able to use it to its fullest possibilities.*
- *I use FB more often than Twitter because you can post more information like assignments, detailed reminders, etc.*
- *Takes a while to figure out how best to use it. Enjoy the expanded network of who is writing and thinking about what.*
- *I'm teaching it to students and faculty more on my campus as part of web 2.0 instruction.*
- *It took me quite some time to get used to Twitter and understand why people used it. I set up an account and then didn't use it for months, because I didn't understand how to use it or its purpose. Once I started following more tweets, then the instant information sharing purpose became clear. Now I use it regularly.*
- *I am working on research on active learning in the career and technical higher education classes. There is a huge learning curve, I thought it would be much easier to teach and students would show me some tricks-not happen. Overall, very exciting and learning how to use it as a backchannel for my presentations.*
- *These kinds of tools are important to spread information, content and knowledge. Open access and information sharing are the most important trends and we can not fight against it.*
- *Although I have used it during presentations (as a speaker) to interact with audiences, I am not sure I would do that during my class sessions.*

JUST UNDER HALF HAVE NEVER TWEETED

As mentioned, just under half of the 1,385 respondents (47.9 percent) who took the survey say they've never used Twitter, that's a slight decrease from 56.4 percent in 2009. Their reasons include a whole combination of factors including:

- Don't know how to use it,
- Don't have time to use it,
- Question its educational relevance, and
- Unsure of whether students use it.

A complete breakdown of their responses, including comparison for 2009 and 2010, is in the following table:

What are your reasons for NOT using Twitter?

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree/disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Don't know how to use it	2010	11.7%	14.3%	25.6%	26.0%	22.3%
	2009	9.6%	15.0%	24.6%	27.2%	23.5%
Don't have time to use it	2010	4.2%	7.5%	24.5%	30.5%	33.3%
	2009	4.0%	8.6%	23.4%	35.9%	28.2%
Question its educational relevance	2010	2.3%	4.8%	24.1%	33.8%	35.0%
	2009	3.3%	6.1%	28.6%	30.6%	31.4%
Unsure whether students use it	2010	22.7%	28.9%	29.7%	14.4%	4.3%
	2009	16.9%	29.3%	30.6%	17.4%	5.8%

Of the 649 who answered the question ‘What are your reasons for NOT using Twitter?’ 101 people added comments to further explain their position. Often the comments served to clarify or expand upon the response options in the survey question, but in some cases new trends emerged as possible issues. Interestingly, one of the big trends to surface this year that wasn’t present last year was the fact that between their course management system, email, and Facebook, many feel they already have too many places to post messages or check for student questions/comments. As one professor put it, “There’s already too much electronic clutter in my teaching life. I don’t need to add another source.”

Overall, most of the comments, some of which are included below, fell into one of three categories:

- Concern it creates poor writing skills/has little educational value
- Students aren’t using it
- Don’t need another communication tool

Concern it creates poor writing skills/has little educational value

Too superficial, too instantaneous, leaves no time or space for reflection

Colossal waste of time, just distracts students from what they should be doing...learning.

Like texting, it encourages poor grammar and atrocious spelling.

I recently read an article on the content of Twitter where it was reported that 60% of it was nonsense, lets keep up the good work and continue to assiduously lower our standards.

Learning occurs best in small groups, face-to-face, with individuals attuned to voice tone, body language, and nuance. That's the essence of what I've learned about good teaching over the last 28 years. If you can show me how any particular technology enhances this reality, I'll be very interested.

I teach Math. Learning Math requires a lot of concentration and individual focused practice. The more students get distracted with all kinds of technologies, the less they have the discipline necessary to learn math.

It is virtually impossible to get to know students these days. They don't show up anymore in faculty offices. They are glued to various electric devices and must be warned before each class to turn them off while in class. They know far less about the world and their own country than students in the past. They think in snippets, and can rarely make a cohesive argument, or write cogently, for that matter. Information Age? What a cruel joke! They don't know diddly anymore. It's all about social contacts. This is not education, and it's all quite sad to see the deterioration I've witnessed in recent years. There are some exceptions to all this, of course, but not very many. I don't wish to contribute to students' addiction to these brain-addling devices.

My goal as an educator is to get students to think deeply and extend their attention spans. This tool is completely antithetical to both. It is a sign of what is wrong with education today.

Don't need any more distractions for students. Keep the classroom free from this nonsense.

It destroys correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. - all elements required for effective communication with multiple groups.

Students aren't using it

Students of traditional age at my college do not use Twitter. They text, Facebook, blog, and more, but they do not use Twitter. National surveys I have read seem to indicate that this is true nationally, not just at my school.

Many of my students do not have computers or cell phones. Requiring use of Twitter may be difficult to impossible for them.

When I asked my students if they would like me to start using Twitter, they almost universally said 'no'. Instead, they felt it would be more useful to use Facebook.

I regularly poll the students and they say that Twitter is for middle school age kids.

Students don't use it; they prefer FB, which they use to keep in touch with me and vice versa.

Most of the students I talk to don't use it. They text.

Don't need another communication tool

I have no interest in adding yet another communication tool to my overloaded life.

I may be an old codger, but between land lines, cell phones, Skype, email, Blackboard, and Facebook, I have enough to keep me busy.

This is just one more thing that needs maintenance and attention in an already overloaded technological and interpersonal world in higher education.

Our online management system has blogging capability. Don't see a need to duplicate the effort and use Twitter.

I have enough ways to communicate with my students and others - seems to me Twitter is like the constant ding of the email or the constant ring of the phone. I don't need more interruptions.

Personal time is at a premium and there are myriad ways to communicate other than Twitter.

Do not need one more gadget to keep up with.

With all of the other electronic resources we have at our disposal, there is no need--or time--for me to use a tool that tells students what I am doing or thinking every 5 minutes. While I can see how some educational applications might be constructed with a tool like Twitter, at the moment I have no interest in pursuing them. I see it as overkill.

There are enough tools available for me to communicate with my online students. I don't need another one. I also don't want to be totally connected all the time. If I were to use Twitter, it would be to communicate timelines and announcements to students. And I can do that already with email and LMS tools.

There are so many options for constant contact, one has to be selective or it becomes overwhelming.

What does it add? I can post messages to my whole class on Blackboard or email them. They are, and should be held, responsible for checking those sources.

I do not know the benefits of using it over something else and do not want to attend a campus session where the younger faculty are more tech oriented, Why take the RISK of trying something new when what I am doing now is working?

I have gone through 3 e-mail systems, Blackboard, Moodle, etc If I thought Twitter was a keeper I would use it. However, I don't want to learn another system just to throw the knowledge away in a year or 2.

IF NOT NOW, WHEN? HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO USE TWITTER IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS?

The next question to non-Twitter users asked them how likely it is that they will use Twitter sometime during the next two years. Based on their responses, it appears that they're less open to trying Twitter than they were last year.

A complete breakdown of their responses, including comparison for 2009 and 2010, is in the table below.

Please note that in 2010, we modified the description of one of the survey choices from "To collaborate with colleagues" to "To share information with peers" after numerous comments that "sharing" is a more accurate description of their activity with peers. We also added a new selection for using Twitter "as a real-time news source."

How likely are you to use Twitter professionally within the next 2 years?

		Not at all likely	Somewhat likely	50/50 chance	Very likely	Extremely likely
To share information with peers	2010	60.5%	15.4%	18.2%	4.2%	1.6%
	2009	53.2%	17.6%	22.0%	5.4%	1.8%
To communicate with students	2010	56.1%	19.2%	17.3%	5.5%	1.9%
	2009	46.1%	23.8%	20.2%	7.2%	2.6%
As a learning tool in the classroom	2010	60.3%	16.1%	17.2%	4.3%	2.1%
	2009	52.9%	18.8%	20.6%	5.3%	2.3%
As a real-time news source	2010	60.2%	17.9%	13.3%	6.6%	1.8%
	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

NON-TWITTER USERS EXPLAIN WHY THEY DON'T TWEET

The final question to non-Twitter users was an optional, open-ended question that asked for additional comments or anecdotes about the role of Twitter in higher education. Here are some of the 159 comments we received:

- *Hard to see how Twitter can engage critical thinking.*
- *I think Twitter is a distraction and a time waster.*
- *We use Moodle on campus which allows us to communicate using forums, blogs, wikis, etc. I don't think it is necessary to use every tool available just for the sake of using them. You need to ask yourself if using the tool is actually adding value to the work that you do.*

- *Hate the idea!! There are enough interruptions as it is, I don't need Twitter to add more. I can find out news on the internet, if I want information quickly. I DO NOT want students contacting me outside of business hours and expecting an immediate response. I DO answer email at all hours--even in the middle of the night if I'm up--but I am not required to do so, and I can choose whether to go above and beyond the call of duty with my work hours when it doesn't interfere with my family or other non-work needs. Twitter would probably increase immediate responses being an expectation.*
- *Will only use it if I have to and email goes away*
- *We have enough of technological distractions in the classroom. I simply do not see our students utilizing technology in terms of improving scholastic achievement; therefore, we need to get back to the basics because Facebook, Twitter, etc. are not doing the job. It is amazing how many people chat on-line and text but cannot type a decent one-page paper.*
- *Hard to see how Twitter can engage critical thinking.*
- *I believe that the use of Twitter perpetuates the growing trend in student inability to concentrate on anything that requires reading or writing at length and in depth. They already seem too tethered to their cellphones, so why create more opportunities for that attachment.*
- *Just because the students do it doesn't mean that it belongs in higher ed. Who are the educational leaders anyway, the faculty or the students*
- *I do not think that Twitter should have any basis in higher education.*
- *I want to explore the possibilities of Twitter as a viable pedagogical tool.*
- *I really doubt how much meaningful communication can take place between faculty and students in only 140 text characters! Unless you're looking for very simple (true/false, or multiple-choice) responses from students, I don't see the point. Even less when you can do the same thing on paper without technical hiccups in a face-to-face classroom environment.*
- *I am not sure how I would apply it to a learning experience.*
- *Sessions I have gone to show some relevance in educational use of Twitter, but others have shown that students don't like to have contact with instructors on things like Twitter and Facebook while students for privacy issues. Also, I would not want to force those who don't want Twitter accounts to have one just to use it for class. I feel there are so many other options for questioning in class than Twitter.*
- *Twitter? Get real!*
- *Technology is a wonderful tool that has become totally invasive and is taking over every aspect of our lives. Indeed, technology has evolved faster than our species' ability to handle it. I believe we must intentionally begin to structure boundaries between personal needs, which may include casual forms of communication, and professional/academic responsibilities, in which communication requires a different interface than that for which Twitter was designed. We must start using the proper tool in the proper context, rather than allowing all technologies to be ubiquitous.*
- *Twitter is like Wikipedia. I don't like the use of Wikipedia and I will not allow Twitter in my classroom.*
- *Twitter seems to be a great tool for learning, but it also is somewhat of an obsession. A few of my students have lost their sense of decorum through their need to Twitter.*
- *I am sure that in certain contexts Twitter may be a useful tool. I have not been convinced of its helpfulness to me and my work.*
- *Twitter is aptly named: It is a playful tool that does not have much substance. I think learning should be relevant and engaging. However, our educational processes have been diluted enough, without trying to entertain our students by using this mechanism.*
- *Social networking sites may help blur the lines of professional distance.*
- *Possible classroom distraction to lecture.*

- *Of the few students who use laptops in class, they have about a 50-50 split with actual class usage and play (My Space or Facebook). The introduction of Twitter may have limited educational use, but I feel, would be more of a distraction.*
- *Yet another example of the unnecessary and dangerous encroachment of "technology" in the classroom. My students (and I suspect all students) are the worse for this profit driven enterprise.*
- *A role? Please. The last thing education needs is another way to skip actual learning, human interaction, critical in-depth analysis, etc... I can't believe this is actually a real, viable question from professionals whose focus is education.*
- *Need training on how to use before could use. Would be willing to try.*
- *Twitter seems to me a tool for the self-absorbed. I have no idea how it would work in higher education.*
- *At the end of a fall 2009 introductory biology lecture class (70+ students enrolled) I asked my students whether they thought that Twitter might have any relevant use in a similar classroom setting. Their overwhelming response was NO, they saw no possible academic application within a given class. Having long harbored serious doubts of applying Twitter in academic classes, my students' response sealed my decision to not introduce Twitter into my classroom.*

TWITTER QUITTERS

Despite Twitter's phenomenal growth, retention remains its Achilles' heel. According to a 2009 report from Nielson Online, the majority of Twitter users create an account, kick the tires, and don't come back. Meanwhile, earlier this year, [RJMetrics](#) analyzed Twitter data and concluded that 25 percent of accounts have no followers, 80 percent of all Twitter users have tweeted fewer than 10 times, and about 40 percent of accounts having never sent a single Tweet. Despite those numbers, RJMetrics found that active Twitter users are becoming more engaged over time.

In this year's *Faculty Focus* survey 16.9 percent of the 1,372 higher education professionals who completed the survey say they tried Twitter but stopped using it, that's up slightly from 12.9 percent in 2009. The two most common reasons for stopping are "Did not find it valuable" and "It took too much time."

A complete breakdown of their responses, including comparison for 2009 and 2010, is in the table below.

Why did you stop using Twitter?

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree/disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
It took too much time	2010	6.6%	11.3%	36.8%	30.7%	14.6%
	2009	5.5%	13.3%	32.1%	38.5%	10.6%
Not enough students use it	2010	8.1%	9.5%	52.4%	19.5%	10.5%
	2009	4.9%	9.3%	52.9%	24.0%	8.8%
Not enough colleagues use it	2010	5.7%	3.8%	39.3%	30.3%	20.9%
	2009	3.3%	5.2%	38.7%	36.3%	16.5%
Did not find it valuable	2010	4.1%	4.1%	15.5%	31.8%	44.3%
	2009	3.2%	4.5%	17.2%	34.4%	40.7%

Twenty-six of the 222 people who answered this question provided additional comments to explain why they stopped using Twitter. These comments include:

- *Messages have to be too short for useful communication. I'd rather use email. It's one more place to have to check for communication.*
- *I didn't really understand how you used it or what it was capable of. Also found it difficult to manage so many different social networking sites at the same time.*
- *With all the places that we have to be online as faculty members, it was an extra I could not keep up with, and I surveyed students in all of my classes and found that none of them used it or had any interest in using it.*
- *At the time, I did not see it valuable. However, I may start incorporating it in class now.*
- *Not enough training to know how to use it effectively.*
- *Only used it once*
- *Received login information but didn't get past the learning curve.*
- *Didn't really know how to use or what I'd want to use it for - no real purpose when I started.*
- *For me personally Twitter was less of an "authentic" social media tool than other applications. I found that personal use far outweighed any practical professional use. I may use Twitter again but only when I feel there is any substantive benefit to doing so.*
- *I already have too many listservs, forums and websites to deal with.*
- *Total waste of quality time that could be directed towards more significant communication.*
- *To put it simply, it is stupid.*

The Twitter Learning Curve

Setting up a Twitter account is very easy, it's what comes after that can be a bit confusing ... how to find people to follow, figuring out what and how to tweet, and understanding the written and unwritten rules. In fact, if you Google the phrase Getting started with Twitter, you get 81 million results. No wonder so many people decide it's not worth the effort.

But as explained by Joanna C. Dunlap and Patrick R. Lowenthal in *Horton Hears a Tweet* (EDUCAUSE Quarterly, vol. 34, no. 4) "With Twitter, as with all social-networking tools, the value of the experience hinges on three things: (1) who you are connected to and with; (2) how frequently you participate; and (3) how conscientious you are about contributing value to the community."

For newcomers it's hard to see any value until their network is built and that takes time. Based on the responses to this question, which asked Twitter quitters in what capacity they used the application before deciding it wasn't for them, it seems there was very little networking.

When you were using Twitter, how frequently did you use it for the following activities:

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Occasionally	Frequently
To share information with peers	2010	36.9%	32.0%	18.2%	8.0%	4.9%
	2009	65.0%	16.5%	13.9%	4.6%	0%
To communicate with students	2010	72.5%	14.4%	7.2%	5.0%	0.9%
	2009	78.2%	14.1%	4.7%	2.1%	0.9%
As a learning tool in the classroom	2010	83.8%	11.7%	2.7%	1.4%	0.5%
	2009	82.4%	6.9%	7.7%	1.7%	1.3%
As a real-time news source	2010	41.0%	23.0%	19.8%	10.8%	5.4%
	2009	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Nineteen of the 228 people who answered this question provided additional comments how they were using Twitter. These comments include:

- *I only sampled Twitter. I did not like the superficial social networking exaggeration of a number of the users.*
- *Communicate with family*
- *As a silent observer.*
- *To satisfy my own curiosity*
- *As a component of a personal learning environment, following others in my field.*
- *Experimentation with learning activities that would happen outside of the classroom*
- *I find it difficult to separate the social from the educational applications when using Twitter. Studies show harmful effects of these short often misspelled and highly abbreviated messages. I find email, SMS and IM to be better suited for academic applications. Let's focus on education and let the gossips have Twitter and Facebook.*
- *I am planning on giving it a try again.*
- *I considered using Twitter as a substitute for an Audience Response System, but chose to use the ARS instead.*
- *I tried to get students to use it and incorporate it into a Humn 427 class where each of the groups was studying an electronic communication medium. No students had ever used it and did not want to use it.*

TWITTER FAILS TO GAIN TRACTION WITH SOME, BUT WILL IT GET A SECOND CHANCE?

The final survey question for people who stopped using Twitter was an optional, open-ended question that asked for any additional comments or anecdotes about their experiences with Twitter.

Seventy-nine respondents provided comments, some of which is listed below. A few respondents seemed open to trying Twitter again, if more students begin using it. Others feel it has no place in the classroom and is forum for the self-absorbed.

Here are some of the comments:

- *Might as well text as Twitter. the novelty of Twitter is fading. Not at all valuable as an instructional tool. Social, yes. Pedagogical, no.*
- *I found it a valuable way to access good information that I might not have found elsewhere and I shared a lot of the information with my students, but they did not want to interact with it at all.*
- *I have four classes next session (4 different subjects) and all have threaded discussions. I respond promptly to all student correspondence no matter what the mode. I do NOT have time to deal with Twitter.*
- *I wasn't a fan of Twitter a couple of years ago. However, I am seeing more practical classroom applications now.*
- *I have not found a use for it that is better than email which I use extensively. I get notified when I have a new email. I have 40-50 emails/day. Professionally, why would I need mini-emails like tweets too? For personal use, I like my friends, but I don't care when they are watching TV and eating pizza, or that they burned their tongue on hot pizza, or that their dog barfed on the carpet. It's just TMI!*
- *There are too many places I need to check daily and this was just another place.*
- *I would like to use Twitter more often and will likely resume using it in the future.*
- *There is potential for Twitter in the classroom/education environment but the campus network, Facebook and Blackboard provide comparable functionality without adding another tool*

- Graduate students are not interested in it. I thought it would be a useful communication tool, but informal surveys indicated few if any students that have Twitter accounts.
- I didn't have enough knowledge about how to use or why when I signed up and never "found" the time.
- Twitter seems to contribute to the attention deficit that I'm fighting against as an educator. It can be a learning tool, but I'm wondering how to marshal its fluidity.
- I was hoping to use Twitter as a tool for colleague and student communications. However, the social aspect of the application seemed to override the business function I preferred.
- Who ARE all these strangers who claim to be following me on Twitter? What does it mean to "follow?" I'm fascinated by the Twitter fans, but I don't know where they find the time to participate in this activity.
- I need to see an example of how it can be effective for student learning to really want to incorporate it in my teaching
- Twitter is one of those services that older faculty (who are rather clueless about technology) think that ALL the students are using and that will be the "wave of the future." In all honesty, the students aren't using Twitter ... it's mostly people over 30 using it. It's really not valuable for getting any kind of information across. And any thing you could put on a "Twitter feed" is more reliably transmitted via email. The students who do use Twitter go into "Twitter mode" and don't place the same value on info that comes through Twitter as they would through email.
- I would like to use Twitter and/or other social networking devices in my classroom, but are looking for good/meaningful ways to implement them.
- As with all Internet-based technologies, I try them out to see what's it's all about. Somehow I never found a function with Twitter and my students. However, I do see the possibilities. Maybe I should try again!
- I want to post announcements one place. If announcements automatically feed to other places, fine, but I don't want to keep up with all that crap. I want FEWER places for students to go online.
- It seemed fairly useless. My interactions with students are usually most successful when they talk at length to me, face to face, and when I give extended responses, face to face. The Twitter communication does not suit the instructional situation--at least not for rhetorical instruction.
- Just seemed fairly pointless to me. I also think knowledge and learning requires more than trivial instant information. It was profoundly boring.
- I hated tweeting. I never liked announcing my whereabouts or what I was doing or about to do, nor do I care what others are doing or where they are going. Useless info!
- I'm always interested to hear how people are using it in case I hear a compelling idea for using it to enhance learning. So far, the stories haven't convinced me.
- As an instructional designer, I support university instructors, so created a Twitter account to become familiar with it so I could better tell instructors how it works and what to use it for. I read articles to keep up-to-date on ideas for instructional use of Twitter, again to better support instructors in improving university education.
- Didn't seem like a quick advantage/benefit learning curve -- easy to use, but difficult to get value of information quickly.
- Online students can over-communicate because when they are online, the normal barriers of distance, waiting their turn, apprehension, second thought etc., are dismissed by the ease with which they can send me messages. All too often the messages concern information they already have. There's a codependency that develops between them and online resources--which often are chosen for them by the search engines--and between them and me. It's the old "How do you spell X," when a dictionary is right behind them syndrome. I love online teaching, but if my students asked the same number of clerical questions in class, we would never cover the material, and as always, certain students ask more than others.

- *It's very important to establish protocols in the course. I do think electronic communication between students helps create a social environment in which they can share and discuss information, but occasionally someone has mistakenly included my address in the discussion, and it appears they communicate, unless otherwise directed, about how difficult or unfair the test was. That's important, but not necessarily the best use. Also, the sequential nature of the medium, however quickly the messengers respond to other messengers, in which one student "speaks" at a time, is not how people communicate except perhaps in 1930s drawing room who dunnits. They tend to be responding to something akin to headlines rather than communication rich in text and subtext. Finally, with poor writing skills the bane of higher education, are students learning to write better this way, or is the truncated hasty medium adding to their carelessness and poor communication skills. Compare the best Tweets with the works of the Imagists, for example, and you'll see the skill required to communicate effectively in such an economic manner.*
- *I simply do not have time to learn how to use it correctly. I am sure it might be a valuable tool, if there was an easier way to learn how to incorporate it into my online course I might use it.*

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted in July - August, 2010. An email invitation to participate in the online survey was distributed to *Faculty Focus* subscribers, as well as to select in-house lists of Magna Publications. *Faculty Focus* also notified its Twitter followers of the survey via its account <http://twitter.com/facultyfocus>.

This is the second year *Faculty Focus* has conducted the survey. Last year's report is available for download from the [Faculty Focus](#) website.



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