

# Cyberbullying Presence, Extent, & Forms in a Midwestern Post-secondary Institution

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## Abstract

This research study was an investigative inquiry as to the forms and characteristics of cyberbullying present in a midwestern post-secondary educational institution. Cyberbullying incidents have increased in educational situations bringing new ethical and legal issues to light; however, most of the research has focused on secondary education. Cyberbullying in this post-secondary institutional study was defined in this research as repeated use of technology to threaten or harass. Researchers utilized an online survey and interview methodology to gather cyberbullying data and information. The survey sought information from a randomly selected group of students (n=16,983) enrolled at any of the university's campuses, inclusive of undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education students, where 276 students participated. Through the survey invitation, a voluntary interview was also requested where nine students were interviewed. Results included confirmation that cyberbullying incidents did occur to and by college students as well as instructors at this institution. The majority of both survey and interview participants did not think it a problem at the university level, but this issue is more serious and prevalent in secondary schooling. Those experiencing cyberbullying as a university student, however, reported moderate to extremely serious effects in their life and learning which included physical endangerment. The researchers have advised more research into this topic. Additionally, while conducting this study, this institution proposed cyberbullying language in their student conduct code to try to address the cyberbullying phenomenon.

**Keywords:** cyberbullying, distance education, higher education, mobile devices, online learning, social networking

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cyberbullying is a relatively new phenomenon that has been extensively addressed by secondary schools, but not by post-secondary institutions. This research study investigated

whether cyberbullying was occurring at a specific midwestern university, and if it was present, what were the forms, extent, and characteristics. From the results, it was hoped that the institution could better understand its cyberbullying landscape to help formulate plans

of action and perhaps policies addressing possible ethical and legal issues.

The cyberbullying definition utilized was by Holladay (2011), "cyberbullying is the repeated use of technology to harass, humiliate, or threaten" (p.4), however, during the course of this research, the university proposed its own definition of bullying and cyberbullying in its student conduct code: "Section VI. Subd. 7. Bullying. Bullying means aggressive behavior directed at another person, either in person or through electronic means, that causes stress or harm and that is repeated over time, including but not limited to assaulting, defaming, terrorizing, making obscene gestures, or invading privacy."

This study involved both survey and interview tools for data and information gathering to address the research questions. It was motivated by an incident that occurred spring semester 2010 on one of the university's campuses involving university wireless technologies in a dormitory lounge. This case involved two Caucasian female students who harassed an African American female student through an online social networking site. The event was traumatic for the victim and abhorred other students, faculty, staff, and administrators. It also inspired students to organize and hold a silent march, and the Chancellor has been addressing the campus climate through various means since. Administrators had no policy directly dealing with this type of harassment other than what was in the student conduct code - although, at that time, "bullying" was not yet addressed in the code. Questions of university liability arose, even though it did not occur in a classroom but was in a university dorm lounge using university supplied wireless Internet.

For this research, all participants were students enrolled on any of this university's campuses. Additionally, the roles of instructors/faculty were investigated and included. Recent news stories on cyberbullying at this university have included faculty. An incident occurred where faculty and staff were cyberbullied fall semester 2011. This case was of a student altering video of an interview and posting it on the Internet. This video interview involved a faculty member and another student, in which the video posting resulted in thousands of email threats to the faculty member, staff, and associated students. Because of this situation, cyberbullying was

analyzed not only between students, but also between students and faculty. The results of this research hopefully sheds light on higher education cyberbullying and associated policy-making.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

With Web 2.0 and social networking technologies infiltrating the educational environment, new issues have arisen, one being cyberbullying (Sellers, Wray, Meeker & Moulton, 2009). Cyberbullying has been evidenced in post-secondary educational institutions (Sellers et al., 2009; Walker, Sockman & Koehn, 2011) and shows to be a global problem (Li, 2007, 2008). Recent police report coverage shows that college students have created imposter social networking sites to harass other students (Luscombe, 2011). Worse yet, cyberbullying related suicides in higher education have occurred (*Wallstreet Journal*, 2010). The negative health impacts of cyberbullying on individuals have been verified (Ybarra, Diener-West & Leaf, 2007). Media reports and research studies involving serious physical threats and suicides have focused on secondary school incidents (Englander, Mills & McCoy, 2009), with increased reports involving children younger than 13 years old (Bauchner, 2011). Researchers are seeing cyberbullying even more pernicious than bullying, as the perpetrator may have less empathy than in face-to-face bullying (Levy, 2011). The negative effect on children and adolescents is evident (Ang & Goh, 2011; Beale & Hall, 2007), however more attention is needed to be directed toward studying cyberbullying in post-secondary education (Sellers et al., 2009; Walker et al., 2011).

Cyberbullying is loosely defined as harassing behavior transmitted electronically. It is a behavior that has been very difficult to define. Originally applied to children and teenagers, the definition is transcending to adults (Sellers et al., 2009). According to Holladay (2011), "cyberbullying is the repeated use of technology to harass, humiliate, or threaten" (p.4).

Cyberbullying is not typical bullying. It can happen anytime, anywhere, with the bully being removed from direct contact with the victim. Cyberbully victims are also more likely to exhibit cyberbullying behavior themselves (Clemans, Graber, Lyndon & Sontag, 2011) and cyberbullying is dramatically changing the bullying landscape in severity and frequency

(Akbulut, Sahin & Eristi, 2010; Wright, Burnham, Inman & Ogorchock, 2009), as well as more female cyberbullies cropping up (Li, 2008).

Cyberbullying policy action begs more refined definition (Brown, Jackson & Cassidy, 2006) because of this distance between the perpetrator and victim and ubiquity of tools used (Woods, 2001). The problem is that school cyberbullying policies are almost nonexistent when violent communications occur through the school's infrastructure, be it on- or off-campus (Brown et al., 2006). Many cyberbullying court cases have used commercial website terms of use agreements to go after cyberbullies, which are policies created by the private entity to limit its liability (Jones, 2011).

Freedom of speech is blocking school cyberbullying policy creation to help reprimand students exhibiting cyberbullying (Conn, 2011). U.S. law has not sufficiently covered this new form of abuse due to freedom of speech, and because of this, cyberbullying policies themselves are problematic for educational institutions (O'Neill, 2008). However, because of extreme cases of life endangerment, state laws are being drafted and school policy is being addressed (O'Neill, 2008). Lane (2011) has argued that it is the responsibility of schools and cyberbullying policy and practices can be implemented successfully.

As state lawmakers and secondary school administrators address cyberbullying, so too should post-secondary education. The technological ease of higher education cyberbullying has occurred because of the rapid investment of university technology infrastructures for student education, as well as students' own technological devices. According to Samarawickrema and Stacey (2007), a majority of higher educational institutions are becoming deliverers of online, educational content to their students through learning management systems. Increasing use of e-learning tools in higher education and a transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 is changing the learning environment and roles of teachers and students; and these new ways of learning and communicating are producing new forms of harassment. Cyberbullies invade email, chat rooms, blogs, cell phones, video recorders, cameras, web- sites, and networked printers to communicate offensive information to other students (Belsey, 2006; Campbell, 2005; Shariff, 2005).

Through survey and interview research, this study considered the institution's responsibility through the eyes of those victimized, perpetrating, and/or witnessing cyberbullying in the university system. It also looked at what was the cyberbullying extent, technologies used, and effects on those involved. Initially an inquiry was planned regarding only victims of cyberbullying, but the literature showed that this problem is complicated. It appears that witnesses are integral in helping alleviate the problem as well as victims are likely to exhibit cyberbullying behavior themselves. The results by Clemans et al. (2011) showed cyberbully victims being more likely to have more reactive aggression and likely to exhibit cyberbullying behavior as well, compared to traditional, face-to-face bullying and its victimization. Because of these studies, this research investigated the roles of not only cyberbully victims, but also the perpetrators and witnesses.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This was an inductive case study to try to answer the research questions as well as to test one hypothesis. An online survey and interview questionnaire (Appendix 1 and 2 respectively) were utilized to collect data and information from students enrolled at the midwestern university.

#### Population and Instruments

After the study's Internal Review Board (IRB) application was approved, requests were sought for students to take an anonymous, online survey and participate in an interview. The survey was the tool for collecting data that was standardized from a large population:

- N= 56,410 of entire student population (from CollegeBoard.com and university campus websites)
- n= 16,983 of randomly chosen emails
- n= 276 survey responses from emails to the study's listserv

The survey invitations were sent to a listserv compiled from randomly chosen publicly available student emails on the university's web directory. This helped to obtain a random sample of those who responded to the online survey. This was a cross-sectional design as the process of sending, receiving, and collecting the data from the online survey was between November 21 through January 16 and generated the data from two email requests – however,

this was considered analyses at a single point in time to “discern patterns of association” (Bryman, 1989, p. 104) within that population or sample of a population (Robson, 2002). Through the emailed survey invitations with consent forms, the interview participants were also recruited.

The online survey and interview questionnaire were field tested to ensure accessibility and navigability of the online form as well as readability and understandability for both survey takers and interviewees. The survey consisted of Likert and open-ended questions to gather both quantifiable data and qualitative information. The interview questions were open-ended to try to illicit as much information as possible. All human research subjects training and approvals were conducted prior to conducting the research. There were no incentives for survey takers to complete the survey, however \$10 was offered as an incentive to participate in an interview.

The research questions and hypothesis are listed as follows. The initial underlying null hypothesis was that cyberbullying does not occur in a higher educational environment. This was not tested as the likelihood of at least one incident reported in the survey and/or interview methods was expected, however the extent and degree was unknown.

The research questions addressed the extent, forms, and characteristics of cyberbullying at this university. Ten questions arose based on previous literature.

1. What is the extent of cyberbullying in the midwestern post-secondary institution?
2. What are the targeted topics of offensive communication (i.e., based on this university’s equal opportunity statement: race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation, or other or unknown)?
3. How and where is cyberbullying transmitted?
4. What are the demographics of the self-admitted cyberbullies?
5. What are the demographics of the self-admitted cyberbully victims?
6. What are the demographics of the self-admitted cyberbully witnesses?
7. What are common themes, if any, of the cyberbullying offenses?

8. What do those involved in cyberbullying (as victims, perpetrators, and/or witnesses) do to help minimize cyberbullying?
9. What do those involved in cyberbullying think the university should do to help minimize cyberbullying?
10. To what extent and how does cyberbullying affect student learning and life?

The research hypothesis was to analyze the prevalence of cyberbullying at the university. A high rate of incident was being theorized. The hypothesis was stated as “over half of the university students have had experiences of cyberbullying as a victim, perpetrator, and/or a witness.”

#### 4. RESULTS

This study showed that cyberbullying does exist at this university, however, not to the degree which was hypothesized. Below relays the survey and interview results that tested the hypothesis and helped answer the research questions. There were 276 student survey takers and nine interviewees. Of a population of 56,410 and a sample of 16,983, these response rates are very low and impeded on conducting more robust statistical measures of the descriptive data.

##### Hypothesis Testing

The research hypothesis was to analyze the prevalence of cyberbullying at the university. A high rate of incident was being theorized. The hypothesis stated that over half of the university students have had experiences of cyberbullying as a victim, perpetrator, and/or a witness. This was evidenced by the survey, however, due to the low survey response rate it is unknown as to its validity. The percentage of student cyberbullying experiences was reported at 51.8% as indicted as follows.

- Ten percent (28, 10.1%) of students stated they were cyberbullied by another student.
- Almost 3% (3, 2.9%) of students selected that they had been cyberbullied by an instructor.
- A little over 2% (6, 2.2%) of students selected that they had cyberbullied another student while being at the university.
- One percent (3, 1.1%) of students admitted to cyberbullying an instructor.

- Over a quarter (76, 27.5%) of the students stated they witnessed cyberbullying behavior by a student towards another student.
- A little over 5% (14, 5.1%) of the students said they witnessed cyberbullying behavior by a student towards an instructor.
- Almost 3% (8, 2.9%) of the students relayed they had witnessed an instructor cyberbully a student during their university experience.

### Research Questions Answered

The online survey results answered some research questions. However these research questions could not be answered as the low response rate could not indicate any correlations:

- What are the demographics of the self-admitted cyberbullies?
- What are the demographics of the self-admitted cyberbully victims?
- What are the demographics of the self-admitted cyberbully witnesses?

The demographics of the survey takers are as follows: two-thirds (186, 67.4%) of the survey takers were female and 87% (240) were white or Caucasian. The average responder was around 24 years old and over half fell into the 18-21 year old range (52%) with most being undergraduate students and the rest continuing education or graduate students. The oldest respondent was 55 years old.

The research question, "what is the extent of cyberbullying in the midwestern post-secondary institution" and, "what are the targeted topics of offensive communication (i.e., race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation, other)," can be answered through the survey and interview responses. For those students stating they had been cyberbullied by another student, the targeted topics of offensive communication were relayed as follows:

- 6 (12.2%) religion or creed
- 6 (12.2%) sexual orientation
- 5 (10.2%) gender
- 4 (8.2%) race or ethnicity
- 3 (6.1%) disability
- 3 (6.1%) age
- 2 (4.1%) marital status
- 2 (4.1%) national origin

- 1 (2.0%) color
- 1 (2.0%) public assistance status
- 1 (2.0%) veteran status

Also, over 30% relayed other or unknown reasons for the attacks. "Other" was specified as online learning problems, abusive relationships, sexual harassment, attack on clothes seen in profile picture/materialistic target/physical appearance, ethical decisions made which the bullier did not approve, misinterpretation of not being able to provide assistance to the bullier, more studious than bullier, did not partake in (as many) parties, not (online) social enough, more (or less) knowledgeable than the bullier, lack of online gaming skills, and misunderstanding of a joke or having fun.

Of the 10% stating they had been cyberbullied by another student, over 46% reported the extent being moderate with some short-term effect on life and learning. Four (14.3%) selected that the cyberbullying had a great extent affecting life and learning and one (3.6%) as seriously impacting emotional health and/or physical trauma. These statistics show that over half of those reporting being victimized by another student during their university studies were at least having short-term negative effects on life and learning.

The percentage of students witnessing cyberbullying were larger. The responses of witnessing cyberbullying behavior by a student towards another student was over a quarter (76, 27.5%). Over 80% of these (142, 82%) related to the university's equal opportunity statement as listed below:

- 28 (16.0%) sexual orientation
- 25 (14.3%) race or ethnicity
- 24 (13.7%) gender
- 18 (10.3%) color
- 14 (8.0%) religion or creed
- 9 (5.1%) disability
- 7 (4.0%) age
- 6 (3.4%) national origin
- 6 (3.4%) public assistance status
- 3 (1.7%) marital status
- 2 (1.1%) veteran status

Of the 27.5% stating they had witnessed cyberbullying by one student to another, the affect on life and learning was reported as over a quarter (20, 26.3%) having little or no affect on life and learning with over 40% (32, 42%) stating the extent was moderate with some short-term affect on life and learning. Fourteen

(18.4%) selected that the cyberbullying had a great extent affecting life and learning and six (7.9%) as seriously impacting emotional health and/or physical trauma. No students reported the cyberbullying being extremely serious that led to life-endangerment. This may show that witnessing the event may provide keys in differences in identifying and addressing cyberbullying.

Also reported was witnessing cyberbullying behavior by a student towards an instructor. A little over 5% (14, 5.1%) of the students relayed they had witnessed a student cyberbully an instructor during their university experience, but the majority had not (258, 93.5%; missing 4, 1.4%). Of those responding yes, 36 characteristics of the cyberbullying were selected. Over 80% (29, 80.6%) related to the university's equal opportunity statement, which also relates to the student conduct code. This could be of importance for future investigation for this institution.

There was also witnessing of cyberbullying behavior by an instructor towards a student. Almost 3% (8, 2.9%) of the students relayed they had witnessed an instructor cyberbully a student during their university experience, but the majority had not (262, 94.9%; missing 6, 2.2%). Of those responding yes, 19 characteristics of the cyberbullying were selected. Almost three-quarters (14, 73.7%) related to the university's equal opportunity statement. Since a large percentage of these respondents named university aspects addressed as being important in their mission, this could be a problem that needs to be investigated.

The number of cyberbullying life experiences for the student was averaged at 4.74 times (missing 18, 16.5%). The average number of experiences of witnessing cyberbullying during the student's lifetime was 5.36 times (missing 26, 9.4%). The average number of experiences of cyberbullying another during the student's lifetime was less than one time, 0.75 (missing 26, 9.4%). This also shows higher reporting of witnessing versus experiencing cyberbullying as a victim or perpetrator. When it came to face-to-face bullying as part of the cyberbullying incidences, students reported an average of 13.1% (missing 29, 10.5%) experiences.

Some students did admit to cyberbullying behavior either towards another student (2.2%)

or to an instructor (1.1%). The reasons for the attacks against students included sexual orientation, gender, age, veteran status, unknown and "other" being political ideologies/affiliations, musical talents, hair color, and name, with one stating it was a joke that was taken out of context. Those cyberbullying an instructor stated the reasons were about teaching style/ability, age, and expectations.

The statistics of being cyberbullied as well as witnessing cyberbullying in grade or high school were much higher, but the incidence of cyberbullying an instructor was low. Over 20% (59, 21.4%) of the students selected that they had been cyberbullied in grade and/or secondary school. Almost 7% (19, 6.9%) of the students selected that they had cyberbullied another student in grade and/or secondary school. Almost a third (89, 32.2%) of the students selected that they had witnessed cyberbullying in grade and/or secondary school. This may showcase the responses of students stating that this is a grade or secondary school issue.

For this midwestern institution, it is of some comfort to know that over three quarters of the responses had moderate to extreme comfort in reporting cyberbullying to university faculty and/or administration. However other students (44, 15.9%) had little comfort and almost 7% (19, 6.9%) had no comfort in reporting (missing 2, 0.7%). The responses as to being comfortable in reporting a cyberbullying event were due to the established environment, relationships with faculty and/or staff, or knowing where to go or what to do. The opposite situations were detailed in either their unknowingness about how to report an incident and/or their distrust of the campus faculty, staff, and/or resources. Some relayed that the university is not responsible for this and this is not applicable.

Again, this study of this institution had a low survey response rate, and also, a small extent of cyberbullying negatively affecting students' learning at the university. The majority (239, 86.6%) reported no extent of cyberbullying having a negative effect on learning (missing 1, 0.4%). Eighteen (6.5%) reported little extent. Twelve (4.3%) reported moderate extent. Three (1.1%) reported great extent. Two (0.7%) reported an extremely serious extent with one (0.4%) reporting a serious extent. However, since there were two reporting an extremely

serious extent, it does raise the issue of a potential university problem.

“How and where is cyberbullying transmitted” was answered as a myriad of technologies provided by the survey and interview answers. The technologies involved in cyberbullying were 27% (125, 27.6%) Facebook™, almost 12% (54, 11.9%) texting, over 10% (47, 10.4%) via email, and less than 2% (7, 1.5%) for both Twitter™ and YouTube™. Other technologies, such as other instant chat, posting websites or applications comprised 8.8% (40) of responses and other online gaming technologies comprised 10.8% (39) responses. These are relayed below. Note that over 40% (112, 40.58%) did not respond or selected not applicable.

- AOL Instant Messenger (AIM)™ (15)
- Generic forums, message boards, blogs, Internet relay chat, virtual network computing with one specific to a university sociology class (8)
- MSN Messenger™ (6)
- Myspace™ (4)
- League of Legends™ (3)
- Starcraft™ (3)
- Halo™ (2)
- Omegle™ (2)
- Team Fortress™ (2)
- Tumblr™ (2)
- World of Warcraft™ (WoW) (2)
- Xbox Live™ (2)
- 4chan™ (1)
- Counterstrike™ (1)
- First-person shooter™ (FPS) (1)
- Hotmail Instant Messenger™ (1)
- InPerson™ video conferencing (1)
- Kakao talk™ (1)
- Leoslyrics™ (1)
- LinkedIn™ (1)
- Okcupid™ (1)
- Ratemyprofessors™ (1)
- Runescape™ (1)
- Skype™ video conferencing (1)
- Slingo™ (1)
- Ultima Online™ (1)
- WebVista/CT™ (1)
- Wireless printer (1)

This represents that cyberbullying does not represent one technology, however the leading social media technologies tend to be used.

The survey responses also helped answer who is responsible when cyberbullying occurred in higher ed. When it came to the responsible parties of cyberbullying incidences in class

(online or face-to-face), the selections were as follows:

- |     |         |   |  |
|-----|---------|---|--|
| 210 | (18.7%) | the one   | exhibiting cyberbullying behavior            |
| 197 | (17.5%) | person(s)   | witnessing cyberbullying behavior            |
| 177 | (15.7%) |   | university instructor(s)/faculty             |
| 142 | (12.6%) |   | university administrators/policymakers       |
| 116 | (10.3%) | person(s)   | who are targets of cyberbullying behavior    |
| 91  | (8.1%)  | Monitors of online classroom activities, such as Moodle or WebCT              | course developers/instructors                |
| 88  | (7.8%)  | Monitors of campus electronic resources, such as university emails, websites, | wireless/ethernet connections and networks   |
| 87  | (7.7%)  | Parents of  | student(s) exhibiting cyberbullying behavior |

Those responsible of cyberbullying incidences on-campus and/or using university resources that were listed as the top six (90.5%) were:

- |     |         |   |  |
|-----|---------|---|--|
| 212 | (21.9%) | the one   | exhibiting cyberbullying behavior          |
| 191 | (19.8%) | person(s)   | witnessing cyberbullying behavior          |
| 140 | (14.5%) |   | university administrators/policymakers     |
| 128 | (13.3%) | person(s)   | who are targets of cyberbullying behavior  |
| 107 | (11.1%) |   | university instructor(s)/faculty           |
| 96  | (9.9%)  | Monitors of campus electronic resources, such as university emails, websites, | wireless/ethernet connections and networks |

Those responsible of cyberbullying incidences off-campus that were listed as the top four (82.8%) were:

- |     |         |            |  |
|-----|---------|------------|--|
| 211 | (27.6%) | the one    | exhibiting cyberbullying behavior            |
| 136 | (17.8%) | person(s)  | who are targets of cyberbullying behavior    |
| 198 | (25.9%) | person(s)  | witnessing cyberbullying behavior            |
| 88  | (11.5%) | Parents of | student(s) exhibiting cyberbullying behavior |

Those responsible included university faculty, staff, and administration, so what does the university do to help minimize cyberbullying in academe? To address one of the research questions, possible ways the university could

handle cyberbullying based on the survey respondents were as follows: almost 21% selected direct punishment of the cyberbully by the university and over 20% thought there should be specific university policy addressing cyberbullying. Over 18% thought the university provide special reporting tools when cyberbullying is exhibited. Over 15% selected that the university instructor/faculty be required to report cyberbullying incidents. Over 10% thought university IT staff record and track cyberbullying incidences. Another 10% thought all courses contain "netiquette" rules in syllabi.

To address the research question, "to what extent and how does cyberbullying affect student learning and life," the answers were 46% responding with 243 selections of characteristics:

- 51 (21.0%) decreased self-esteem
- 45 (18.5%) interruption(s) in education, negatively impacted ability to complete coursework
- 40 (16.5%) loss of or withdrawal from social contacts and experiences
- 32 (13.2%) depression
- 13 (5.3%) increase in anger management issues
- 12 (4.9%) decrease in g.p.a./lower grades
- 50 (20.6%) other (listed in Appendix 3)

### Qualitative Survey Responses

Of the survey respondents, only 61 (22%) responded to the open ended question on providing additional information for this study. The survey comments were categorized into what the university could/should do, cyberbullying is a problem of immature people and level of social media involvement, respondents had little experience with cyberbullying, issues related to cyberbullying presence in higher education, cyberbullying is unclear or hard to address, cyberbullies are part of life, it is a police matter, it is a freedom of speech issue, and it is the witnesses' responsibility to report. Details of these responses are in Appendix 3.

### Interview Results

Nine interviews were conducted with anonymous results shown in Appendix 4. Initially 64 (23.2%) survey takers responded that they would be interested in an interview, however, because this researcher did not know who

responded to this survey question, and they were told to contact the researcher, only 23 relayed interest to the researcher with just nine interviews successfully conducted.

Four of the interviews were taken over the phone, one was via Skype, and the rest were face-to-face. There were interviewees from all campuses except one. Notes were altered to ensure they were sufficiently de-identified and no interviewee could be identified. Common themes from these interviews were that Facebook™, Twitter™, texting, and email were utilized as the technology for bullying. Most of the interviewees were witnesses of cyberbullying. One was victimized by cyberbullying, and law officials and legal charges were involved to stop the cyberbullying. Two stated that cyberbullying had not been witnessed by them during their university studies and did not know if it really was a problem in higher education. Most relayed that students have to just deal with this bad behavior, but university resources should be available if it does become serious. It appears that witnesses will take responsibility and communicate to the bully that the behavior is wrong.

### 5. ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The assumptions of this study are that cyberbullying is occurring in higher education and impacting students' lives and learning. It also assumes that it exists not only at this specific midwestern institution. However, the leading limitations were that small response rates were retrieved from the survey and interviews. Because of these samples and that the research was a case study, generalizability to other post-secondary educational institutions may or may not be appropriate. However, cyberbullying was shown to exist as well as the negative consequences of cyberbullying on some students' lives. This institution has already investigated this issue and is planning to adopt bullying, inclusive of cyberbullying, definitions in its student conduct code.

### 6. CONCLUSIONS

Clearly cyberbullying is occurring at this institution. However, the severity in students' lives and learning ranged from no negative effects to being extremely serious (i.e., life endangerment). With situations reported in this research involving physical endangerment and



the police, it is a topic to take seriously. Student survey and interview respondents agreed overall that in severe cyberbullying cases involving physical endangerment, the university has responsibility. According to respondents, those responsible included policy makers, information system administrators and staff relating to monitoring electronic resources and/or providing reporting tools.

Another topic of research may be how to define cyberbullying. Rates of witnessing are much higher for the student respondents at this university and during their lives than being victimized or being a cyberbully themselves. Questions may arise as to what cyberbullying truly is. In other words, can it be misinterpreted as a witness, victim, and/or a perpetrator?

Additional research is needed with our fast-paced technological era infiltrating our lives, inclusive of our educational pursuits. This research showed that many technologies, not only those that are socially popular, are used to harm others. It is likely technologies will continue changing and college students will acquire and use them to communicate with each other and faculty/instructors. It is also likely that higher education will increasingly adopt them for teaching and learning. Understanding the immediacy of communications and social interactions and their consequences may be at the forefront of new educational research fields. What post-secondary education can do to help in delivering high quality, as well as safe, instruction is the core of our evolving landscape. Through this research study, it is recommended to conduct more research on cyberbullying and affiliated policies and reporting tools in higher education.

## 7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Gratitude goes to the survey and interview participants.

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## Appendix 1

### Survey Questions *(provided with consent form)*

1. What is your gender?
  - Female
  - Male
  - No specification
2. What is your age?
3. What ethnicity best defines you?
  - Alaskan Native
  - American Indian
  - Hispanic or Latino
  - Asian
  - Black or African American
  - Native Hawaiian
  - Other Pacific Islander
  - White or Caucasian
  - No specification
  - other input
4. What category best defines your student status?
  - Undergraduate-Freshman
  - Undergraduate-Sophomore
  - Undergraduate-Junior
  - Undergraduate-Senior
  - Continuing Education-as a pre-undergrad
  - Continuing Education-as a pre-graduate student
  - Continuing Education-as a post-graduate
  - Graduate-enrolled in a master's program
  - Graduate-enrolled in a doctoral program
  - Graduate-non-degree student

Questions 5-16 are based on the definition of cyberbullying for this study:

"cyberbullying is the repeated use of technology to harass, humiliate, or threaten" (Holladay, 2011, p.4)

- 5a. Have you been cyberbullied as a university student by another student?
- Yes
  - No

If yes, to what extent?

- NONE
- LITTLE
- MODERATE
- GREAT
- SERIOUS
- EXTREMELY SERIOUS

If yes, was there a specific characteristic the cyberbullying targeted? (check all that apply)

- race or ethnicity
- color

- religion or creed
- national origin
- gender
- sexual orientation
- age
- marital status
- disability
- public assistance status
- veteran status
- unknown
- other- please specify:

5b. Have you been cyberbullied as a university student by an instructor?

- Yes
- No

If yes, to what extent?

- NONE
- LITTLE
- MODERATE
- GREAT
- SERIOUS
- EXTREMELY SERIOUS

If yes, was there a specific characteristic the cyberbullying targeted? (check all that apply)

- race or ethnicity
- color
- religion or creed
- national origin
- gender
- sexual orientation
- age
- marital status
- disability
- public assistance status
- veteran status
- unknown
- other- please specify:

6a. While a university student, have you exhibited cyberbullying behavior towards another student?

- Yes
- No

If yes, to what extent?

- NONE
- LITTLE
- MODERATE
- GREAT
- SERIOUS
- EXTREMELY SERIOUS

If yes, was there a specific characteristic the cyberbullying targeted? (check all that apply)

- race or ethnicity
- color
- religion or creed
- national origin

- gender
- sexual orientation
- age
- marital status
- disability
- public assistance status
- veteran status
- unknown
- other- please specify:

6b. While a university student, have you exhibited cyberbullying behavior towards an instructor?

- Yes
- No

If yes, to what extent?

- NONE
- LITTLE
- MODERATE
- GREAT
- SERIOUS
- EXTREMELY SERIOUS

If yes, was there a specific characteristic the cyberbullying targeted? (check all that apply)

- race or ethnicity
- color
- religion or creed
- national origin
- gender
- sexual orientation
- age
- marital status
- disability
- public assistance status
- veteran status
- unknown
- other- please specify:

7a. While a university student, have you witnessed cyberbullying by a student towards another student?

- Yes
- No

If yes, to what extent?

- NONE
- LITTLE
- MODERATE
- GREAT
- SERIOUS
- EXTREMELY SERIOUS

If yes, was there a specific characteristic the cyberbullying targeted? (check all that apply)

- race or ethnicity
- color
- religion or creed
- national origin
- gender

- 
- sexual orientation
  - age
  - marital status
  - disability
  - public assistance status
  - veteran status
  - unknown
  - other- please specify:

7b. While a university student, have you witnessed cyberbullying by a student towards an instructor?

- Yes
- No

If yes, to what extent?

- NONE
- LITTLE
- MODERATE
- GREAT
- SERIOUS
- EXTREMELY SERIOUS

If yes, was there a specific characteristic the cyberbullying targeted? (check all that apply)

- race or ethnicity
- color
- religion or creed
- national origin
- gender
- sexual orientation
- age
- marital status
- public assistance status
- veteran status
- unknown
- other- please specify:

7c. While a university student, have you witnessed cyberbullying by an instructor towards a student?

- Yes
- No

If yes, to what extent?

- NONE
- LITTLE
- MODERATE
- GREAT
- SERIOUS
- EXTREMELY SERIOUS

If yes, was there a specific characteristic the cyberbullying targeted? (check all that apply)

- race or ethnicity
- color
- religion or creed
- national origin
- gender
- sexual orientation
- age
- marital status
- disability

- 
- public assistance status
  - veteran status
  - unknown
  - other- please specify:

8. To what degree of comfort do you have in reporting cyberbullying to University faculty and/or administration?

- No comfort
- Little comfort
- Moderate comfort
- Great comfort
- Very great comfort
- Extreme comfort

What is the University doing or not doing that supports you to make that selection?

9a. Did you experience cyberbullying in grade and/or secondary school as a victim?

- Yes
- No

If yes, to what extent?

- NONE
- LITTLE
- MODERATE
- GREAT
- SERIOUS
- EXTREMELY SERIOUS

If yes, was there a specific characteristic the cyberbullying targeted? (check all that apply)

- race or ethnicity
- color
- religion or creed
- national origin
- gender
- sexual orientation
- age
- marital status
- disability
- public assistance status
- veteran status
- unknown
- other- please specify:

9b. Did you experience cyberbullying in grade and/or secondary school as one exhibiting the cyberbullying behavior?

- Yes
- No

If yes, to what extent?

- NONE
- LITTLE
- MODERATE
- GREAT
- SERIOUS
- EXTREMELY SERIOUS

If yes, was there a specific characteristic the cyberbullying targeted? (check all that apply)

- 
- race or ethnicity
  - color
  - religion or creed
  - national origin
  - gender
  - sexual orientation
  - age
  - marital status
  - disability
  - public assistance status
  - veteran status
  - unknown
  - other- please specify:

9c. Did you experience cyberbullying in grade and/or secondary school as a witness?

- Yes
- No

If yes, to what extent?

- NONE
- LITTLE
- MODERATE
- GREAT
- SERIOUS
- EXTREMELY SERIOUS

If yes, was there a specific characteristic the cyberbullying targeted? (check all that apply)

- race or ethnicity
- color
- religion or creed
- national origin
- gender
- sexual orientation
- age
- marital status
- disability
- public assistance status
- veteran status
- unknown
- other- please specify:

10. To what degree has cyberbullying negatively affected your learning at the University?

In what ways?

11a. Please estimate the number of your cyberbullying experiences:

At anytime in your life:

- # as being victimized by cyberbullying
  - # as witnessing cyberbullying
  - # as exhibiting cyberbullying behavior
- On any of the university campuses:
- # as being victimized by cyberbullying
  - # as witnessing cyberbullying
  - # as exhibiting cyberbullying behavior



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11b. Approximately what percentage was face-to-face bullying part of your cyberbullying incidences?

12. What technologies were involved in your cyberbullying experiences? (please select all that apply)

- email
- texting
- Facebook™
- Twitter™
- YouTube™
- other instant chat/posting website(s)/application(s) - please specify:
- other audio/video website(s)/application(s) - please specify:
- online gaming - please specify:
- other - please specify:

13. Who do you think is responsible in minimizing cyberbullying incidences? (please select all that apply for each category)

Incidences occurring in class (online or face-to-face)?

- the one exhibiting cyberbullying behavior
- person(s) who are targets of cyberbullying behavior
- person(s) witnessing cyberbullying behavior
- University administrators/policymakers
- University instructor(s)/faculty
- Parents of student(s) exhibiting cyberbullying behavior
- Monitors of online classroom activities, such as Moodle or WebCT course developers/instructors
- Monitors of campus electronic resources, such as University emails, websites, wireless/ethernet connections and networks
- other - please specify:

Incidences occurring out of class, but on campus and/or using university resources?

- the one exhibiting cyberbullying behavior
- person(s) who are targets of cyberbullying behavior
- person(s) witnessing cyberbullying behavior
- University administrators/policymakers
- University instructor(s)/faculty
- Parents of student(s) exhibiting cyberbullying behavior
- Monitors of campus electronic resources, such as University emails, websites, wireless/ethernet connections and networks
- other - please specify:

Incidences occurring off campus?

- the one exhibiting cyberbullying behavior
- person(s) who are targets of cyberbullying behavior
- person(s) witnessing cyberbullying behavior
- University administrators/policymakers
- University instructor(s)/faculty
- Parents of student(s) exhibiting cyberbullying behavior
- Monitors of campus electronic resources, such as University emails, websites, wireless/ethernet connections and networks
- other - please specify:

14. What are possible ways you think the university should handle cyberbullying:(please select all that apply)

- University policy specifically addressing cyberbullying behavior
- Direct punishment of person exhibiting cyberbullying (e.g., suspension, expulsion)

- Special University reporting tools of cyberbullying behavior by victims and/or witnesses
- University instructor/faculty requirements to report cyberbullying incidences
- All courses requiring "netiquette" rules in syllabi
- University IT staff recording and tracking cyberbullying incidences
- other - please specify:

15. In what ways has cyberbullying affected you? (please select all that apply)

- interruption(s) in education, negatively impacted ability to complete coursework
- decrease in g.p.a./lower grades
- loss of or withdrawal from social contacts and experiences
- decreased self-esteem
- depression
- increase in anger management issues
- other - please specify:

16. Please share any other comments about cyberbullying you think will assist in this study?

17. Would you be willing to be involved (during spring semester 2012) in a short face-to-face interview as part of the second phase of this study in which information you share will also be anonymous?

- No
- Yes  
If yes, you will be provided the interview consent form for your review and approval prior to the interview during the spring semester 2012.
- Maybe

If yes or maybe, please contact the researcher, as the researcher does not have your information to contact you.

Thank you very much for your time and assistance in helping shed light on the cyberbullying phenomena in a university setting.

### **Reference**

Holladay, J. (2011). Cyberbullying. Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review, 76(5), 4-9.

## Appendix 2

### Interview Questions *(provided with consent form)*

Please refer to the definition of cyberbullying for this study when answering interview questions: "cyberbullying is the repeated use of technology to harass, humiliate, or threaten" (Holladay, 2011, p.4)

1. During your enrollment at the University, approximately how many cyberbullying events have you experienced?
2. Were you a cyberbullying witness, victimized by cyberbullying, and/or one who exhibited cyberbullying behavior as a university student?  
Please explain your role in the incidence(s).
3. How many individuals were involved in the university cyberbullying incident(s) you've experienced?
4. What were their roles, such as a university student or instructor, parent of student, etc.?
5. What forms of technology were involved?
6. How long did this go on?
7. What did you do about the situation?
8. What did others do about this?
9. What repercussions, if any, happened to the person exhibiting cyberbullying behavior?
10. What were the outcomes for the person victimized by the cyberbullying?
11. How did these event(s) affect your life and learning?
12. What can the University do to help students share cyberbullying incidents with University faculty and/or administration?
13. What is your opinion as to how to minimize cyberbullying at the University?
14. What additional information would you like to add for this study?

### Reference

Holladay, J. (2011). Cyberbullying . Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review, 76(5), 4-9.

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### Appendix 3

#### Qualitative Survey Responses

##### **Cyberbullying affecting university learning "other" category:**

50 (20.6%) other - please specify:

- As a mother, I witnessed my teen-age son victimized to this behavior.
- Disappointment when I read about instances in articles, or what have you.
- I am informed of how cyberbullying could affect others including my classmates and instructors.
- I didn't want to play the games anymore.
- I have witnessed it once or twice. I know it is a big issue, however I think my campus at least, is able to control it quite well. I have never witnessed cyberbullying on campus.
- Allowed me to fight against authoritarians and white male supremacists without fear that some authority will intervene and make things fair, hamstringing my words and allowing an idiotic and insidious point of view to remain unchallenged.
- Increase in feeling uncomfortable in the presence of my advisor
- It's caused me to be amused at how silly and childish people are on the internet, which, if anything, should improve self-esteem.
- Lessened comfort and sense of safety on campus.
- Makes me want to get even...because the current system has failed to provide the proper redress to stop it.
- Not feeling safe in my home
- Ruins the vibe.
- Reputation of university tarnished with racial comment on facebook incidents last year
- 30 answered "none" or "not at all" with these comments:
  - None for me, but I know it has affected my friends' ability to do well in school. Some of them even dropped out.
  - None. I have just seen the effects in those affected.
  - No affect whatsoever. didnt know it was occurring.
  - None, to be honest. I've never seen or heard of anything I'd consider cyberbullying.
  - None. I am not phased by cyber bullying.
  - Hasn't really affected me.
  - This stupid survey that I decided to fill out is really bothering me. Why am I doing this its such a joke. People need to stop crying about bullying its not a problem. The problem is people need to grow up and deal with there problems.
  - Cyber bullying hasn't affected me at all.
  - Cyberbullying hasn't really affected me because I was not a victim and I wasn't the one bullying a person.
  - Haven't had an experience negative enough to affect me.
  - Can't say it has affected me much. It's part of the competitive environment of online gaming which my experiences with cyber-bullying are exclusive to. You give it out and you take it.
  - I have not been affected by this type of behavior, to my memory.
  - I have not been affected.
  - Hasn't affected me personally. Has made me think about how people get hurt and think about what kind of people cyberbully.
  - It hasn't.
  - It's not an issue
- 5 answered not applicable
- 1 selected "other" with no response

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***What University could/should do.***

- As a public educational institution the U has an obligation to not only protect its students, faculty and staff from bullying but to actively oppose it through discipline, education and advocacy and monitor and control its impacts.
- Netiquette notes in syllabi is a good idea.
- The emphasis on cyberbullying is laudable, but please don't forget that face-to-face bullying still happens frequently - particularly in the form of derogatory comments about sexual orientation ("that's so gay", etc).
- Tools should be there for witness and victim, but direct involvement by the University is not necessary (yet).
- Would the university policy address more than the university websites or would it also include other sites such as Facebook-
- By allowing peers to personally attack one another without any repercussions may perpetual the cycle. When bullying is no longer face-to-face the chance of consequences decrease, and therefore increase the likelihood of attacks that are higher in intensity.
- Cyberbullying is as bad as face to face bullying. All forms of bullying must be eliminated for the health and equality of all students. Too many lives have been lost because bullying has been allowed to be brushed under the rug. We needs stricter punishments for any form of bullying.
- I think being able to talk to people about what is happening will also help lower cyberbullying.
- I think just by having your leaders of any institution promoting the proper behavior is a great step. Then if they can convince leaders of the student body, not just the political leaders, but the leaders in social groups, to also follow the behavior then I think the problem will be solved.
- I think schools should take this more seriously.
- If this will turn in to a committee that is going to decide policy on this issue, remember that most students are leaving home for the first time. I don't think online monitoring of people's accounts is appropriate, but let the students know that it can be an issue and where someone should go to report it.
- Explain what the University considers to be cyberbullying at the beginning of the study or in the invitation e-mail.
- Such behavior should be clearly labeled as unacceptable, and in the event that it occurs, the offender should be expelled.

***Cyberbullying is a problem of immature people - not a college/university issue.***

- Adults need to grow up.
- To be completely honest, I think cyberbullying is something that is only a problem for middle school and high school girls.
- It's not an issue, nothing needs to be done.
- It is not as common in the University setting and when it does happen it tends to be freshmen or sometimes sophomores
- I have witnessed it once or twice. I know it is a big issue, however I think my campus at least, is able to control it quite well. I have never witnessed cyberbullying on campus. I have never lived off campus. Maybe, with the use of Facebook and other online resources cyberbullying is present. However, I don't think students, staff, or faculty would tolerate any sort of cyberbullying in a University setting. We are a very open and accepting campus community and I do not think a cyberbully would do much harm before someone stood up to them.
- I am of the opinion that allegations - concerns over cyberbullying may be legitimate with young children, in cases where parents should be keeping closer tabs on how their children communicate. Frankly, I find it a little strange that the university is even looking into this. I feel that learning proper social interaction is part of college, and that adding guide-rails would detract from that learning experience. And at any rate, much of what could be considered "cyberbullying" occurs outside university networks and websites, and is by definition not the university's domain.
- From my experience, cyberbullying is uncommon at the university level. Students who wish to bully other students generally do so face-to-face, rather than through technology. Most potential bullies understand how much more risky cyberbullying can be, and choose to do it in person, usually in a secluded area to avoid getting caught.
- Cyber bullying is ridiculous as a subject to study.
- From what I've seen, it isn't a big deal after high school.

- 
- Don't institute any new policies. This is a university and a big one at that any action that could make a serious difference would be far too big of an invasion into the privacy of university faculty and students. As it is it is simply not big enough of an issue to begin infringing on free speech rights. By this point in students lives they are hopefully mature enough to handle these situations on their own or understand that there are relevant authority figures who are capable of helping.
  - I personally haven't seen cyberbullying going on in my age group since I was in junior high. I'm sure it still exists, but I think it's more of a problem for less mature ages.
  - I'm not going to be a help because I feel like the only bullying that is a problem is face to face because you can't stop it, but online there is plenty of ways to block that person from getting to you.
  - It's a joke, does not exist stop making a deal of it.
  - Is this really a problem at U campuses- While it may be in high schools, I would think that college students can better control their behavior. Or so we would hope. However, the fact that they can't, or don't, doesn't mean the U should play Big Brother, beyond having a policy akin to what it has regarding verbal bullying. Students should be encouraged to report incidents to RAs, professors, etc, which and law enforcement, but any action needs to come from established University policies. Students who are experiencing bullying can also be encouraged to contact the campus counseling services, which are mandated reporters in the case of physical threat to self or others, as are professors and RAs. Bullying that occurs in class or via class-required online activity should be treated the same as it would be if the same action occurred in the classroom.

#### ***Level of social media involvement.***

- I personally feel as if some victims of cyberbullying are hated on because they post too deep of statuses or too personal pictures etc. Controlling and censoring what you post on the internet can lower your chances of being cyberbullied.
- I know people that have been cyber bullied and I helped them reduce their vulnerability to cyber bullies.
- I don't have Facebook, If more people were in the same boat as me the world would be a better place.
- Honestly, I have very little interaction with messaging media that would normally be used for cyber bullying. I do not have a facebook, twitter, myspace, or a blog. In the past, I rarely used AOL messenger (when it was popular), and I only google chat with my significant other and a NA or no response group of close friends. My youtube account is private and I do not post messages using it. This is not hyper-vigilance, I just do not feel that socialization over the internet is good for social development, as it allows people too much anonymity, which in my opinion leads to things like cyber-bullying, but also increased social isolation and inability to function in social situations. Also, I know that future employers often scan these media to screen applicants, and this ensures there is no unflattering information out there that would discourage future employers.
- Cyberbullying is a new phenomena for someone my age (34 yrs.), email was only starting to be used when I originally entered undergraduate education at the university. At this point in my education, I am beyond the point of really being a part of the university 'lifestyle.'
- I have heard of cyberbullying, but I do not participate frequently in online social networks. I only use Facebook to keep in contact with far away friends and family.
- I think cyber-bullying in regards to online gaming is not an issue. It doesn't much affect my real life other than thinking something was a little mean/unwarranted/unfair; it's just for sport like talking smack in a sports game. Cyber bullying on social networking sites like Facebook must present a different issue and a different challenge/solution. That I imagine is much different as to how it affects a person.

#### ***Little experience with cyberbullying.***

- I've been bullied before in my life, but not cyber-bullied. This is a new phenomenon that came with technology, it hasn't happened to me.
- You should include a "not applicable" option to those of us for whom "cyberspace" didn't exist when we were in grade school.
- I don't think this existed yet when I was in primary school.
- I have never been apart of cyberbullying, never a witness, attacker, or victim, while at the University or after.

- 
- I haven't really seen cyberbullying and, for example, in my high school (Coon Rapids) where students were just recently suspended for bullying, the whole story isn't seen by admins or instructors. A thorough investigation would be necessary before some rash decision is made because we want to squash the problem.
  - I think this is more of a problem for the generation below me.
  - I'd imagine this is something that younger students who grew up with social networks in grade/middle/high school have more experience with.

***Cyberbullying presence in higher education.***

- My experience with cyberbullying was a combination of spoofing and property theft. The individuals stole my phone and copied my Sim Card. They then started spoofing messages to most of my contacts lies about myself and my significant other. These couple of individuals continued to harass and try and convince my parents, family and friends that I was involved in all sorts of illegal activities that made it seem like I was a criminal and a bad person. I am still trying to find it in my heart to forgive these 2 individuals, but struggle with the anger and hate towards them daily. I never once retaliated for what they did, but I am trying to with hold this and other aggression towards them.
- Since you can not see who if cyberbullying you, you start to think of everyone as the bully causing them to withdraw socially.
- Lots of sexual harassment.
- I would not be comfortable meeting due to worry about how this would affect me, as many students have brought this to [school] by administration. We have been told that there are funding issues and school might not be accredited and that this is not the time to bring up the issues. These issues need to be brought up to the [accrediting board] accreditation as school should not be allowing this.

***Cyberbullying issue is unclear or hard to address.***

- I just do not understand how the University has a role in this unless the cyberbullyer is using a school computer or something like that.
- I think it is personally something difficult to track because the cyberbully can say, "that's not what I meant" if confronted about his or her behavior.
- I think that there is a current national obsession with bullying.
- Possibly tell us what your definition of cyberbullying is that will be used in your research.

***Cyberbullies are part of life.***

- I think if you guys actually care about this issue the best thing you could do is to tell students (but not is stupid seminars because nobody cares about seminars) that online there are these things called haters. Tell them that they're everywhere and that you can't take them too seriously because when they insult you they don't really care about the insults or about you or insulting you. What they care about is making you freak out because it's funny when people freak out and the easiest way to do it is to insult you. so that's what they do. they're called trolls and they know what they're doing because they do it a lot. ignore them. it's hard, harder than it sounds, but do it anyway. Do it because they won't listen to reason, because that's what they want because when they don't listen you'll freak out and that's what they want because it's funny. Of course you won't see it that way because you care about what you're talking about but they don't so they'll just insult you more. Don't listen don't explain yourself, just ignore them. This obviously doesn't apply to all situations, because you might know them, but please don't feed the trolls. It only makes them hungry.
- Some people are just jerks [*sic.*], and there is not much anyone can do about it.
- Cyberbully the cyberbullies.
- In the few cases I've seen, cyberbullying is made worse by responding aggressively as is the case in many face-to-face encounters. I believe it is important for people to take what others say on the internet with a grain of salt. While the person bullying may really believe it, they probably wouldn't say it to the person's face. While most people have some prejudice (big or small), the internet seems to reduce people's inhibitions because there is less threat of punishment.

***This is a police matter, not a University matter.***

- I was interrogated from the city's police officer because she thought I wrote this rude message to a student on campus which was not true because I never wrote it and she just thought I did it right off the back because that student and I got into an argument so make sure the police officer gets their facts straight before going to the student accusing them of nothing. Also, don't get the whole entire chancellor involved. The school does not need to be notified. The police should.
- Did not have success with campus police, but with city police.

***This is a freedom of speech issue.***

- It's a tough issue to talk about. Some people say "I have freedom of speech/text/etc", while others believe it is cyberbullying. The definition of cyberbullying is not clear enough. Maybe as part of orientation, cyberbullying needs to be addressed.

***Witnesses' responsibility.***

- When it comes to cyberbullying on a public site, such as Facebook, I think it's up to the witnesses of the bullying to stand up for the person getting bullied.



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## Appendix 4

### Interview Summaries

Three male and six female students were interviewed between December 22, 2011, and April 1, 2012. One interview was via Skype, four were face-to-face interviews on the students' campuses, and four were telephone interviews.

#### Interview A

The interviewee was not victimized by cyberbullying but a witness to cyberbullying and knows the male who was the cyberbully. The incident occurred spring semester 2012 and Facebook was used. She knows about cyberbullying because of the big focus to educate students about bullying in secondary school. In her high school, suicides were attributed to being bullied, so a lot of efforts to stop bullying were put into place. Regarding her university account, witnesses on Facebook were in opposition to the cyberbully and responded to the bully as his behavior being wrong. She has witnessed cyberbullying using other technology. With Twitter, bullying can be more aggressive, and with FaceBook you can block people, as there are more controls. There seems to be a lot of rude remarks in Facebook but aggressive (continuing) bullying can be done using Twitter. Resources that could help minimize cyberbullying at the University would be the use of security and surveillance and the bullies' resources could be blocked or de-activated because of misuse. Students usually know where they can go to get help if they are victimized by cyberbullying. Each technology has different ways to deal with it, such as blocking and unfriending in Facebook. Students have to make their own decisions. The University doesn't need to get involved unless it gets to be serious.

#### Interview B

Interviewee was witness to, but not victimized by, cyberbullying. A listserv is used on this campus and there were posts that were sexist in nature that were inappropriate. There were back and forth responses where other witnesses emailed that the statements were inappropriate. Campus police got involved, however, it is a freedom of speech issue. The duration was about a week and it ended up in the local newspaper. It was brief and hasn't happened since.

Facebook is also used where demeaning commentary is posted. There were about six people involved in that event witnessed and there were multiple episodes of responses. Witnesses usually tell the bully to stop it. Sometimes postings are just jokes and taken the wrong way and overreaction occurs.

Ways that the University could help is to better filter the listserv postings, educate students, involve the themed weeks on campus for education. Student rights are important. This small campus has close relationships between students and faculty (e.g., faculty are addressed on a first-name basis by students) and students have opportunities to seek help and advisement if there are problems. We are all adults. School representatives should speak out about this too when serious problems occur. Students should report cyberbullying events and be open and discuss it. The bully should be confronted. There is a technology/media course on this campus that addresses cyberbullying.

#### Interview C

This interviewee has not evidenced cyberbullying at the University. She has witnessed Facebook events that were initially a joke but taken the wrong way and ended up not being a problem. It is the student's responsibility to act correctly as well as deal with negative communications. The University doesn't need to do anything unless it becomes a serious problem. The University could send out emails to inform students what to do in case they are in need of help.

#### Interview D

The interviewee has been involved in an event that began spring of last year, and is still an ongoing problem. The interviewee and fiancé were (and still are) targets of cyberbullying, more so for the

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fiancé than himself. It started out when they were dating and going to school on this campus (he has recently graduated and has moved from this campus' city. His girlfriend, now fiancé, left this campus and goes to school elsewhere, however the cyberbullies have followed her there through a network of the cyberbullies' friends.

The event started out with the bullies accusing him of stealing money from them, which he did not do. The bullies, one being a resident advisor (RA) on the campus, stole his sim card from his phone and copied the info and sent crank texting to his family and friends (e.g., sent messages that his girlfriend was pregnant, which she was not). The form of cyberbullying is termed "Spoofing." The bullies also stole his laptop. The bullies went to campus police and lied about the stolen money. One campus police officer sided with the bullies rather than him and his girlfriend. The city police ended up being helpful for him and his girlfriend. There are now charges against the bullies, one in particular, and she may end up in jail over this ordeal because it is considered a stalking offense.

As horrible as this has been for him and his fiancé, he believes he is stronger now. He also realizes how patient he can be through difficult times, his fiancé more so. It appears justice will prevail. However, even though it was one unhelpful campus officer, he has no faith in the campus police in these circumstances.

### **Interview E**

The interviewee has witnessed cyberbullying while a student at the University, but has not been victimized. There were two events he relayed that were during his university studies involving students. One was via email and the other using Facebook. The duration of each lasted only about a day. Witnesses told the bully to stop their behavior. The victims were appreciative to have help from their peers. Neither of these events affected him in any great way. The University could help on a case by case basis depending on severity. There could be emails from the University to address this and/or report it. There can be a fine line as to whether cyberbullying is actually occurring or just rude behavior.

### **Interview F**

The interviewee witnessed cyberbullying that took place via Facebook between students of the University. Students should handle this on their own. They can block people on Facebook and via email. The University shouldn't get involved unless there is the possibility of physical and re-occurring threats. An anonymous tip line could be created and announced to students if they need help. Cyberbullying is a problem as it is much easier to do than face-to-face bullying.

### **Interview G**

This interviewee has not experienced cyberbullying while a university student. If it happens, the cyberbully should be confronted. The University could create a policy. Faculty should be resources for students to go to with these problems. With online social networking increasing as an important part of student's lives, liability and legal issues may increase that could be detrimental to the University. As long as University resources are involved in incidents, the University has more obligation to be involved in minimizing these problems.

### **Interview H**

This interviewee was involved in two cyberbullying incidences as a witness, however, they were both out of class, one using Facebook, the other Twitter. The bully made a fake profile of the victim on Twitter. This was eventually removed after about one month. There are liability issues involved. The Facebook incident was arguing between people. Younger students (in secondary school) usually are more immature. University students should be more mature to know what is appropriate or not. Both of these incidents did not last long. Face-to-face bullying is more direct and obvious, but cyberbullying is behind the scenes and may or may not be a problem. The definition of cyberbullying

is not clear. The University shouldn't get involved in this other than advocating appropriate behavior. The University shouldn't go to the extent of blocking users from resources.

### **Interview I**

This interviewee had just one cyberbullying incident as a witness which involved her friends, one being the bully and one being the victim. Face-to-face bullying was also involved. The bully also exhibited aggressive behavior with other students and they just put up with his behavior, however some students do tell him to stop, even though most are afraid of him. Both Facebook and Twitter were used in the cyberbullying attacks on her friend. Very negative comments were posted. She stood up for her friend and the bully seems to be backing off now. She says her friend is tough and has taken it well, but the behavior is disturbing to her and other students. Her friend has sent milder negative responses back to the bully, but mostly she ignores it. No one sided with the bully and he did not get the reaction he was probably expecting. Students know to go to their advisors if they have problems, so not sure what else the University could do to assist in minimizing this behavior. The incidents were reported to the advisement office but it got dropped initially. The bully's behavior is affecting students who are in the same academic program. The bully appears to need to feel in power over others. The bully also has a charismatic personality so is well-liked at times. Bullying is a personal issue each student has to deal with and most students grow up and know what is appropriate behavior and what is not. It does become a problem if serious, and that is where laws, such as stalking laws, could come in to play.