

Going Face-to-Face with Facebook

By MAILI LIM

"Just make the account so you can see all my new pictures, and then delete it."

Even coming from my ex-boyfriend, it sounded so benign. I would get on this thing they called "Facebook," check out what mischief the kid had been up to in Venezuela the past few weeks, sign off, and then never use the thing again. Done deal. Little did I know, as I reluctantly re-entered my email address on the sign-up page, that I was signing away hours of my precious life with one swift action.

Sure, Facebook has its strong aspects -- its convenience and ability to provide us with instant gratification has earned it brownie points in popularity, with the number of new users increasing by more than double in the past year. It's true that there are classmates I'd probably never see again if it wasn't for Facebook, as well as friends all over the world with whom I would have lost

touch. I'll admit it: thanks to Facebook, I can barely go a day without checking my profile to reassure myself that I am still connected to the social arena. But at what cost is all of this being granted?

In reality, what comes disguised as an unmatched convenience is actually bringing out the worst in us. Those childhood friends you thought you'd lost contact with forever? To be frank, you were probably too lazy to physically send a letter out in order to sustain the actual relationship. Contact lessens, connections diminish, friendships die. Back in the day there was zero tolerance for laziness. Nowadays, there's more than enough wiggle room—but with social networking utilities such as Facebook, who can blame us? A simple message on Facebook Chat demands far less effort than any other means of communication. Let's face it—we simply don't have it in us to even find the

stamps anymore.

Don't think that I'm just hating on Facebook; it's the whole social networking scene, Twitter and Formspring among many others. Why do we adore these services so? The truth is that they act as enormous stages—places where we can go to showcase our lives and gather input from others. To be honest, I'm guilty of it just as much as the next person—I am thrilled when someone drops a new question in my Formspring inbox. If you think about it, the idea behind Formspring is actually quite remarkable; is there a higher compliment than asking someone a question? Ultimately, Formspring cleverly hooks its users by building up and stroking their egos via questions asked by their family and friends. So what does that make us? Studies claim that this phenomenon has reduced us to an infantile state. While that may be a tad extreme, I definitely agree that such phenomena encourages

selfishness.

And of course, there's the infamous stalking that everyone—and I mean everyone—does. Admit it. Remember that cute guy you met at the beach? Got a little bored, and before you know it, you've got the down low on "Mr. Hottie's" trip to Scotland last month and what all his friends have to say about it. If you ask me, that's a little excessive. What happened to the "Hi, my name is ____"? way of getting to know people? Or has that become obsolete? Browsing Facebook to "stalk" those we don't personally know may seem harmless, but in reality, it detracts from true social interactions and the rewarding relationships reaped from such communication.

It's not as if our generation is entirely clueless. If you yourself have not attempted to take a "Facebook vacation" then you probably know of friends who have tried. And failed. Most of us began to feel

something was missing; with Facebook devouring hours of our precious time each day, we ought to have noticed something!

I know Facebook helps you keep your connections alive. I know that as an NCSSM unicorn, Facebook has helped you start off on a great foot with your senior/junior sibling. I know the convenience of Facebook, and the brilliance of social networking. But I also know that the world beyond a pixelated cyberspace is just as radiant, if not more so.

If you're a Facebook addict, here's food for thought: just because something lies at our fingertips doesn't mean it should be used without discretion. So for all of you who consider Facebook convenient, or even vital, understand the value of what you're giving up for that convenience—seconds, minutes, hours to spend beyond a computer screen, to take a breath of fresh air and truly live your life.

Mixers, and IVIZes, and IDP's ... oh my!

By XAVIER JARRETT

Seniors, after experiencing countless Hill mixers and several IDP's (Instant Dance Parties), you know what to expect from these unique social events. Juniors, for some of you, these events may come to rule your weekend lives here on campus.

Now for those newcomers, you may be asking yourselves what these three activities are, exactly.

Senior Andrew Espenshade summed them all up in one concise phrase: "Hot, sweaty, and fun!"

At NCSSM, the administration understands that we are often limited when it comes to certain freedoms students are used to having. Activities such as driving your car and running barefoot around campus have been taken away. It seems that in an attempt to compensate for the loss of these everyday privileges, the administration hosts several school dances; however, these dances are not always the greatest social activities.

"School hosted things tend to be kind of drag. Administration is a kill joy," senior Robert Sprude said.

In response to these sometimes lackluster dances, students host their own dance parties otherwise known as mixers. Unlike the administration-approved events, mixers feature student DJ's who cater directly to their peers.

"Who else knows how to throw a party with music better than your own friends? Mixers are a fun, chill atmosphere to let loose," senior Gina Thompson said.

Mixers are run entirely by the students with only the occasional SLI checking in. This laid-back and care-free

attitude provides an atmosphere that's more accepting of how students really want to express themselves.

While the first few mixers may seem like an overcrowded room of people flailing around, these events are a great way for juniors to

"No one knows you yet. Everything is new. . . . Have fun!"
-Gina Thompson

interact with other students and seniors.

If you feel as if your dancing is sub-par, there is nothing to worry about. The freeing environment at NCSSM encourages us all to humiliate ourselves on the dance floor, especially during those first few weeks on campus. The events often serve as better icebreakers than the activities you will attend with your brother or sister hall.

"Mixers are the better places to go if you want to meet people. Though you may not be talking, you will be jumping around, laughing, and sweating," senior Walter Vaughan said.

As a student who attended the Fourth West mixer last year, Vaughan knows about sweat extremely well. During the start of the year, Fourth West is known for hosting the first official mixer. In previous

years, the event has had so many people in attendance that the students' collective sweat "rained" down from the ceiling. Students exited the hall lounge wringing out their shirts stained with the perspiration of others.

Unfortunately, the class of 2012 may not witness "raining" sweat as the Fourth West mixer cannot be hosted on hall any longer. Due to a fire-safety code that was brought up last year, all mixers have to be hosted off of the residential halls. Without the smaller spaces for the sweat to gather, it appears as if the juniors will escape the sweaty mixer that the seniors now hold as a fond memory.

Similar to mixers, IDP's happen throughout the year, as well, but they tend to occur less often. The key difference in the two events is that while mixers tend to focus on mainstream music and hip-hop, IDP's are heavily centered on techno music.

"IDP's are usually dark, so I don't have to worry about how badly I dance, and I can just have fun. Plus, I really like strobe lights, techno, and the rave environment. It's mindless fun," senior Taylor Haag said.

For those students who are adamant about not dancing, IVIZes (Inter-hall Visitations) serve as an alternative source of fun. During an IVIZ, students are allowed to venture onto halls of the opposite sex. While an SLI still constantly checks in on students, IVIZes still possess the same care-free atmosphere of mixers and IDP's. Whether it's playing video games, dancing to music, or just talking, IVIZes are a welcomed break from the normal residential separation that males and females must face.



Students start the year off with lots of dancing and lots of sweat at the Fourth West Mixer.

From www.facebook.com

Even though IVIZes allow for males and females to explore halls that are normally off limits to them, some current seniors found the first few IVIZes to be rough. "[IVIZes] can be very troublesome for juniors who want to meet new people and just be able to hang out somewhere because no matter where you are, going up to a random room and staring at the people and the room inside is just awkward," Vaughan said.

Sprude agreed with Vaughan, "IVIZes are great, but awkward before you know anyone." Bringing along a senior sibling for the first few IVIZes might help ease the strange transition into exploring another gender's hall.

Juniors, no matter what events you decide to partake in, follow this piece of advice from Thompson: "No one knows you yet. Everything is new. Take some risks! Have fun!"

The only way to truly embrace the Unicorn lifestyle is to engage in something new and out of the ordinary. If you

wouldn't do it at your home high school, at least try it here. Who knows, maybe you'll discover something new about the social facet of your life.

The Stentorian 2010-2011

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