



Emerson
COLLEGE

Parent and Family Programs

Parent and Family Facebook Groups:
The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

1. Introductions

- ▶ Sharon Duffy, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, Emerson College
- ▶ Maureen Hurley, Director of Parent and Family Programs, Emerson College



2. Goals

- ▶ Share Evolution and present data of Emerson's Parent/Family Facebook Groups
- ▶ Discuss the Management of group
- ▶ Case studies and shared experiences
- ▶ Tangible best practices through lessons learned
- ▶ Q & A's



History of Emerson's Parent/Family Facebook Groups

- Created in the summer 2012 by an Emerson parent. Independent and not moderated.
- In the fall of 2012, the overwhelmed parent admin asked IA staff for help in moderating the group.
- Moderator progression - Institutional Advancement staff -> Staff in Student Activities, Admission and Orientation -> Parent and Family Programs.
- In the summer of 2017, families were invited to the Accepted Student Family Page and migrated to Main page after Orientation.
- In the fall of 2017, the group of incoming student families wanted to stay connected and created an unmoderated page specifically for their use.

History of Emerson's Parent/Family Facebook Groups

Description

The Emerson College Parent Programs group is available for parents, guardians and families of current Emerson College students and alumni. This group has been established to provide the opportunity to **connect, share experiences and ask questions** about the college.

Management of Emerson's Facebook Groups

Expectations

Posts by members reflect **individual opinion** and are not expressed as official representation of Emerson College.

Emerson College group administrators reserve **the right to remove posts and/or members** not in keeping with the intention and purpose of this group.

Personally identifying students is discouraged, and may lead to removal of posts. **Sensitive or emergency information should not be shared** on this page. Please contact the school directly.

Parents or family members may **BUMP** a post 2 times only to allow for equal access.

Management of Emerson's Facebook Groups

Membership Control

- ▶ Member requests must be approved by a moderator (and 3 questions about the student must be answered - added summer 2017)
- ▶ Previously required parent/family member to request to be added via an email sent to Parent/Family Programs office.
- ▶ Membership restricted to families of matriculated students (and some alumni families)
- ▶ Experimented with page for newly accepted families this past summer.
- ▶ Membership may include individuals who are not currently affiliated with the College (graduation).

Management of Emerson's Facebook Groups

Admins and Contributors Across Departments

- ▶ 5 admins - Maureen, Sharon, staff in enrollment, web-services.
- ▶ 22 professional staff and 3 student employees are members.
- ▶ Questions are answered quickly and correctly through the cross-campus moderation.
- ▶ Facebook Live with the Housing Assignment staff. Event pictures posted. Pet pictures.

History of Emerson's Parent/Family Facebook Groups

Activity

Between September 1- October 31, 2017, the group logged:

- 100 posts,
- with 73,920 views,
- 2018 reactions and
- 965 comments.

We have **1873** distinct members.

Of the 98 top non-staff contributors ,
7 logged just under **200** of the
comments.

Snapshot of Emerson's Parent/Family Facebook Groups

Age Range

Age Range	Women	% Women	Men	% Men	Totals
13-17	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
18-24	10	0.50%	9	0.50%	19
25-34	27	1.40%	9	0.50%	36
35-44	79	4.20%	27	1.40%	106
45-54	769	40.90%	221	11.80%	990
55-64	464	24.70%	185	9.90%	649
65+	48	2.60%	25	1.30%	73
Totals	1397		476		1873

History of Emerson's Parent/Family Facebook Groups

US and International

Countries	Members
United States	1837
Outside of United States	36

Snapshot of Emerson's Parent/Family Facebook Groups

Popular Days

Day of the Week	Posts, Comments and Reactions	Most Popular Time of the Day
Monday	225	8-9pm
Tuesday	292	7-8pm
Wednesday	236	8-9pm
Thursday	310	5-6pm
Friday	228	4-5pm
Saturday	239	9-10am
Sunday	202	9-10pm

Snapshot of Emerson's Parent/Family Facebook Group Posting Time

Most Popular Times

8-9pm

7-8pm

9-10pm

5-6pm

6-7pm, 10-11am

10-11pm

4-5pm

9-10am

8-9am

11am-3pm

Least Popular Times

11pm-midnight

7-8am

midnight-1am

6-7am

1-2am

2-3am; 5-6am

3-4am

4-5am

Snapshot of Emerson's Parent/Family Facebook Groups

Sept-Oct, the award goes to...

- Most commented post
 - "Starting to think about next year already. My son will be a junior and need to live off campus. Can anyone who has been through this process, provide insight?"



- Most Reactions to a Post
 - "I was very touched to see this at Emerson when we arrived for parents weekend. Just wanted to say thank you ❤️👍"
- Most viewed post
 - "Emerson #3"

Case Studies

- ▶ Student Emergency
- ▶ Concern about Food Service
- ▶ Safety Concern

You are the director of Parent and Family Programs. You moderate the official Parent and Family Facebook page and are a member of the rogue Parents of Class of 2021 group. Your urban campus has a satellite campus on the west coast and in the Netherlands.



Case Studies Scenario 1: Student Emergency

A. A parent posts very early this morning, EST, on the Parent and Family Facebook group: "My son just let me know that a student was found dead in a dorm room. Everyone is upset. How tragic."

In comments from other parents, it is alleged that this happened on the West coast campus and that students in the program have been sharing the name of the deceased individual.

B. You discover that it is unknown if the parents and family members of the deceased individual have been reached by the police, and you know that the college will not make a statement until the family has been notified. Families are starting to post identifying information about the situation and the individual involved.

Case Studies Scenario #2: Concern About Food Service

A. Last week, a hot topic around an untrimmed piece of meat that was served to a student was resolved. Today, a parent posts a photo on the Parent and Family Facebook group that depicts a brownie with green spots clearly visible on the bottom of the dessert. The caption reads: “My daughter just sent me this photo of a moldy brownie. This has gone too far. We must demand a new food service provider.” Within minutes, other members of the page post comments about how disgusting the brownie is and encourage action against the school’s food services and call for parents to engage in a hunger strike in the President’s Office and protest an upcoming prospective student admission event.

B. You contact the school’s Business Director who oversees Dining Services and find that the brownie in question was made using M&M’s. The pastry chef tearfully mixes another batch to demonstrate to the Business Director that the green M&M’s tend to sink towards the bottom of the pan.

Case Studies Scenario #3: Safety Concern

- A. On a Tuesday evening in September, you get emergency alerts via text, email, and phone that the campus is in lockdown due to an active shooter in Boston. Simultaneously, parents post on both the official and unofficial groups about the incident. Panicked parents and family members begin a long string of comments, sharing information that they are getting from their students. You are not on-campus at the time of the incident. About 15 minutes into the emergency, there is information shared that a 19-year-old male has been shot.
- B. Less than 30 minutes later, you receive a message that the emergency is resolved, the lockdown is over, there is no continuing threat to the campus community and there is no reason to believe that the 19 year old male had any relationship with the college.

Scenario Debrief

In each Scenario:

What was the "good"?

What was the "bad"?

What was the ugly?

How we resolved each scenario.

Best Practices/Lessons Learned

- ▶ Crisis management lessons
 - ▶ Quick response and continual updates
 - ▶ Channel responses to one place
 - ▶ De-escalate and comfort
- ▶ Balancing giving enough information while maintaining FERPA
- ▶ Use original source of communication

Best Practices/Lessons Learned

- ▶ Using Facebook as one approach in communication strategy (an important one, but not the only method)
- ▶ Anticipatory/proactive posts
- ▶ Recruit family-to-family communication (Family Ambassadors)
- ▶ Other best practices/lessons learned?

Wrap Up

- ▶ Questions and Answers
- ▶ Door prizes!

"Good" for the win!

I hope all "newbie" Emerson parents have recovered and are safely at home. :) I just wanted to share with you that you will stop crying, you will feel better and graduation will come sooner than you think! I blinked and my daughter was in Boston for 4 years and is now back home

We are watching with horror what is happening in Texas. My older son mentioned that some families from the affected areas who are bringing students to Emerson may end up stranded in the Boston area. We live in the area (about 2 miles from a T stop) and have an extra room so if you find yourself in that situation and need a place to stay please PM me.

This site has been extremely helpful - such a great idea! Mentioned this to a parent with a student at another school and they said "wow that's great - wish we had something like that."

I am the Dad who offered up a homecooked meal during the meeting at the Majestic on Tuesday. In addition to the meal, if your child misses their pet we have a dog (Riley) and a cat (Geddy Lee).

Yeah, we're THOSE parents with the matching shirts... but our girl is super happy so it's all good!



Addendum A: Full Facebook group expectations

The Emerson College Parents and Families group is available for parents and family members of **current** Emerson College students. Posts by members reflect individual opinion and are not expressed as official representation of Emerson College. Emerson College group administrators reserve the right to remove posts and/or members not in keeping with the intention and purpose of this group.

A few guidelines:

- 1) In order to protect the privacy of your student, **please do not give identifying information** (i.e. name, room location). Although an effort is made to keep spammers and non-Emerson affiliates from joining the page, posts made even in a “private” group should be discrete and considered public. **Please do not post anything to the group that you would not want your student to see.**
- 2) Please utilize the group page search function before posting a question—chances are it has been asked previously. On a computer, the search bar may be found under and to the right of the cover photo. When you’re in the group on a mobile device, there is a magnifying glass icon. If click on it and type your topic i.e. “Kasteel” into the search box to find previous conversations.
- 3) **Please do not use the group to report or discuss emergencies.** Emergencies should be directed to the Emerson College Police Department at 617-824-8888 (or non-urgent matters at 617-824-8555). In additions, there are times when you might receive information about an Emerson student or a situation from your own student or network. Please stop and think about whether or not this information should be shared in a semi-public forum. There may be family members or friends on this forum who have not yet been notified of the situation through formal channels. If there is important information to be shared, it will come through the office of the President or the Division of Student Affairs. Of course we do not want to curtail discussion of important incidents that affect our community, but do ask that you pause before posting.
- 4) The goal of this group is to provide a communication vehicle for Emerson family members; please do not use the group to promote, sell, or disseminate products, employment opportunities, businesses, or opinions not relevant to the group.
- 5) Please always use appropriate language and **treat other members with respect.** Postings that are inflammatory, discriminatory or offensive will be removed. Please do not BUMP (bump up my post) more than 2 times to allow for others to have their posts read.
- 6) When you share attachments in our Facebook group please make sure that your settings are on ‘public’ or your attachment will not be visible.
- 7) The group administrator may remove members for inappropriate use of the group. Please notify parents@emerson.edu if you have a concern about the page.

Addendum B: Political Discourse

A firestorm of comments followed a posting of the College's President's letter to the community following the election of Donald Trump. Here is the letter:

November 9, 2016

Dear Emerson community,

No doubt, for many of you, the morning sun did not bring you the outcome you had hoped for. This morning, I met students, staff and faculty on the 10th floor of Walker and on sidewalks, whose faces betrayed weariness, fatigue and disillusionment.

Here are a few things, I think I know:

We are a nation at war with itself as we struggle to understand who we are and what we stand for. However, this struggle is not new, but as old as the nation itself and the issues that divide our nation today have existed for generations.

The major trope of our time, at home and abroad, is borders. A borderless economy and the unraveling of the borders of nation states account for the big upheavals of our times as nations struggle to hold onto their national identities and the working class and manufacturing companies struggle to cope with the unhappy consequences of a borderless economy and global corporatization.

These and attendant issues found voice and agency in the president-elect.

The results of the presidential election seem tectonic, as if the very ground on which we stand has shifted profoundly. Some of us feel as if our identities – our very beings – are under siege – that our virtuous hope for individual dignity and respect has been profoundly diminished and altered by this election.

Yes, this was a change election, but so was 2008 and 2012. All is not lost or won, for there will be other change elections to follow in our lifetimes.

In our communities – wherever we live or work - we encounter the increasing diversity of the United States. We encounter how a new “globalism” has changed our relationships with neighbors that once seemed so far away and so abstract; and how this new proximity and interdependency has changed the way we think about education, commerce and society.

Addendum B: Political Discourse (continued)

As a nation committed to equality and social justice, our hope is that, out of the rich diversity of human experience, we can create communities of learning, communities made both beautiful and effective by their pluralism.

This is the great American dream – not the politics of division, marginalization and defamation that seek to deny us the full expression of our identities in a democratic society. And though it may be in ascendancy in the embodiment of our president-elect, it will not endure.

To our students:

You were educated to virtue.

I want you to understand that to be fully educated you cannot be mere spectators. You must instead stand for something.

Through intellectual inquiry, intercultural understanding, and civic responsibility, I want you to know in your hearts the true value of a good education and its power to create light and liberty and beauty and hope and truth out of a sea of darkness and despair.

We need your leadership more than ever – now and into the future. I implore you to remain full of hope – to continue to do the good work that you already do. You cannot afford to be silent.

I challenge you to lift up your sweet and strong voices; lift up your hand of compassion, your hand of hope, your hand of faith.

I look forward to the new futures you will build, beginning today.

Sincerely,

Lee Pelton

Addendum B: Political Discourse (continued)

Here's a small sampling of the comments that followed Dr. Pelton's remarks:

I'm not sure if I like the Emerson President coming out with his personal viewpoint to the Emerson students. I am sure not all Emerson students feel this is "tectonic", nor all the families of these students.

⇒ Supporters of both candidates recognize that this is "tectonic". Isn't that what Trump supporters have been clamoring for?

⇒ Well, not knowing you, I'm not sure if your statement is lightly veiled racism. But, I am sure that if Dr. Pelton's letter, which addresses the issues this president-elect ran on, makes you uncomfortable -- you have an uncomfortable 4 years ahead of you.

⇒ Not uncomfortable. That was a low blow. I do not think it is appropriate. My daughter goes to this school too so please don't be rude. I am able to post my opinion as well. Am I not ?

⇒ Sorry that you're offended, and I apologize for questioning if your response was racially biased, that was unkind. Your response proves my point: of course you can post your opinion, but I'm saying you'll have to get used to the fact that your president-elect ran a hate-based campaign, because we all know he did. So if that upsets you, it's going to be a long 4 years.

⇒ As far as the school, it's hard for me to believe that addressing the fear evoked by a man who brags about grabbing women by the genitals is controversial. Can you explain to me how Dr. Pelton addressing this is out of bounds? Please, tell me.

We made the decision to allow the conversation to continue, as it was in response to an Emerson-related post, although many complaints were received both on the group page and private messages.