Opinion

The unnoticed impact of social media

By ALYSSA SCHNEIDER
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I kinda wish we didn't have social media. If we didn't, I wouldn't be spelling "kind of" like "kinda." Are we ever really offline?

Offline means "not performed using the internet," according to the Oxford English Dictionary. You might hear that definition and think back to the time when you deactivated your Instagram or TikTok account for a "social media cleanse," but that's not what offline means at all. In today's society we can turn off our phones and still feel online. We no longer have to actively be on the internet to be using what it has taught us.

Let's look at Snapchat. Let's be real, it's strange that we have the ability to access one another's locations. There has been an ongoing debate about location sharing for years as it can be a violation of your privacy as well as safety.

The threat does not stop there. Even if you, like myself, only add people you know in person, you're still at risk, just a different kind. There have been times where I have been on Snapchat and saw all my friends' locations together, without me.

The social media FOMO does not end when you close Snapchat. There has been a trend going around where people will make a Life360 circle with their friend group. At first glance, this may seem like harmless fun and even a safety tactic.

But it actually does far more harm than good. I have had personal experiences where I realized I had been left out of a group event because of Life360 or Snap Map. Knowing your friends ditched you or chose to hang out without you would not be nearly as obvious, if at all, 20 years ago.

With today's modern technology, at the click of a button we know where people are and what they are doing, in turn leading to heightened anxiety and FOMO.

In a survey conducted by PubMed regarding levels of FOMO, of the 1,125 young adults studied ages 17-26, the ones who experienced the most FOMO, were the ones on social media most frequently.

Have you ever been scrolling on TikTok or Instagram Reels and came across a video saying something along the lines of "I hate when people…" or "that one girl who…?" With our current technology, people can tell the world whatever they want in a matter of seconds, not even having to think twice before clicking "post."



ILLUSTRATION BY JACOB FOWLER

The ability to click a button and mass communicate with millions of people almost makes what you're saying feel less substantial, but that is not the case. Each one of those millions of views is a person. A person with a story, a family and a life behind the screen they are looking at.

When we post complaints about a certain type of person that gets on our nerves, we have no idea who it is reaching and how it will affect them. In this country, we are lucky enough to have freedom of speech, however, freedom of speech does not guarantee freedom of consequences, even if said consequences are not yours to reap.

Many of us, including myself, live our lives second guessing our words and actions because a stranger on the internet told us too. We question what our friends really think of us because SnapMap or Life360 told us where they were, when we were never supposed to know.

We don't even realize it anymore. We have become so consumed by the latest app or trend, that we have forgotten we were never even made to see our own reflections. Humans created mirrors, just like we created media.

Social media is like a mirror to the real world, reflecting everything around it onto the nearest person, but often distorting it or changing the true appearance. We were never meant to hear everyone's opinion or see what everyone is up to, but with apps like TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram and Life360, it is impossible not to.

Odds are you are reading this on an Apple device right now, likely after a couple hours of doomscrolling or procrastinating on doing something important, something that likely also requires engaging with a form of digital media.

I can write all I want about the "unnoticed impact of social media," acting like I'm above it. But I'm not. No one is. We are all affected.

In another study by PubMed, of the 563 young adults ages 18-22 studied, those who spent more time on social media had heightened anxiety compared to their peers.

Social media sickness is real, and it's not a flu or a fever that hits you like a truck, it's a long, lingering cough that just won't seem to go away.

So if you'll excuse me, I need to take a picture of this article off my MacBook so I can post it to my Instagram later, captioning it "in my journalism era." It's for the feed. It always is.

Nothing but greed

The NCAA prioritizes money over student athletes

By REX NAYLOR
Contributing Writer

The Wofford College men's basketball coach, Dwight Perry, was fired on Sept. 12 because of his team's meal swipes. It is safe to say this is an incredibly rare occurrence.

Wofford basketball won its conference last year and found itself in the NCAA tournament looking to make a return in the 2026 season. Six new players were put in underclassmen housing, despite the plan to put them in upperclassmen housing. Perry, helped the players out by putting them in a house to rent off campus for the time being.

The players forgot to switch their meal plans from on-campus to off-campus, and this meant they received "impermissible benefits" from the school and paid $84 to $108 less than they should have. For this reason, Perry was fired and the six players were suspended from the team.

In a world where teenagers like Bryce Underwood make over $10 million to play college football, Jeremiah Smith $4 to $5 million to do the same, and thousands of others receive money directly from the school, it's great to see the NCAA has its priorities straight with cracking down on meal plans.

The NCAA denied having anything to do with the exclusion of the players or the coach, so days later, the players were let back on the team. Perry, however, remained fired.

Despite the NCAA stating they had nothing to do with the disciplinary action taken, the situation still leaves a growing stain on their reputation in today's college sports world.

Small schools like Wofford are having a harder time competing with the big "Power 4" schools, which are in the Big 10, ACC, SEC and Big 12 conferences. With the introduction of name, image and likeness allowing players to make money off themselves for performance and reputation, and the transfer portal growing in recent years, funding is becoming a bigger headache.

The idea of the student-athlete is beginning to fade as 18-year-olds are seen as business assets rather than athletes. In July 2021, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled NCAA athletes could receive compensation for their status as players for their name, image and likeness.



ILLUSTRATION BY EMILY KATZ

Despite this great step forward there are no real rules or regulations over what students can do to make money, leading to a completely free market in which players are crying out for leadership and structure.

In the summer of 2023, 10 of 12 schools left the Pac-12 conference, leaving only Washington State and Oregon State teams like Washington, Oregon, USC and UCLA all joined the Big 10, where every other week it seems they're making a trip to New Jersey, Pennsylvania or the midwest for a match. The reason for this isn't better competition, it's better television deals. Better deals mean more money.

You could argue that what they are doing is good for the athletes, because if they get more revenue, they can pay their players more. However, there is still a cap in place where schools can only pay a total of $20.5 million for all their athletic teams.

The development of college athletes is starting to regress. A player could go to a big school, make six figures, but never see the field. Many would prefer this over going to a smaller school, developing, playing week in week out, getting paid a couple thousand at best and getting a degree or even transferring to a larger school if they are good enough.

Will this become the next way for college athletes? Maybe. The new era of college sports is the wild west as there is truly no regulation.

Schools are also running their athletes into the ground. Football teams are playing 17 games if they make the national championship. Basketball teams can play 40 games by the end of the NCAA tournament, and Tennessee played 73 baseball games last season winning the College World Series.

All of this is for the glory of college sports and the money that comes with it, over the development and betterment of their athletes.