

# IMPROVING ACCESS TO COLLEGE THROUGH GAMES, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

WILLIAM G. TIERNEY, ZOE B. CORWIN, RAQUEL M. RALL, AND ANTAR TICHAVAKUNDA

The U.S. Department of Education recently awarded the Pullias Center for Higher Education a \$3.2 million grant through its First in the World program. The investment allows the Center to expand the reach of its online college access game, *Mission: Admission*, created in collaboration with USC's Game Innovation Lab.

The First in the World program announced \$75 million in grants to 24 universities in fall, 2014. The support is intended to spur the development of innovations in postsecondary outcomes, college affordability and evidence-based practices.



Over four years, the Pullias Center will implement the college application game in schools across California through a web-based platform. Previous research conducted on the game shows that game play positively affects a student's college-going efficacy and college knowledge. The role-playing game, along with an extensive student-centered social media campaign and support materials for teachers and counselors, offers schools online tools to actively engage students in preparing for college.

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The new grant builds upon previous research and evaluation funded by the Institute of Education Sciences in the Department of Education [award R305A110288], the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation and the TG Foundation. The project began with internal support from the Office of the Provost at USC.

The project addresses three national challenges pertaining to increasing the rates of underrepresented and low income students enrolling in college: (1) the need to engage and motivate students to learn about college in relevant and effective ways; (2) the need to expand access to college and financial aid information and support; and (3) the need to implement and sustain programs on a wide-scale.

A key project innovation entails meeting students where they spend time – in online and game spaces – by using technology, games and social media tools to motivate, educate, and support students in applying to college and for financial aid. Through a random-control trial and case studies with selected sites, researchers will explore the effects of game-based learning on students' college-going efficacy, college knowledge, FAFSA completion and college enrollment.

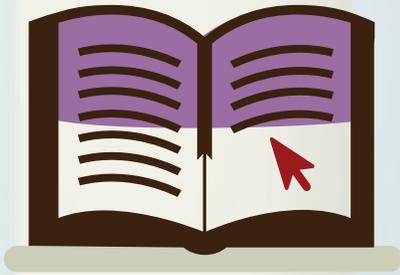
The project, which will be directed by Drs. Tierney and Corwin, brings together a collaborative research team including Gale Sinatra of USC Rossier, Dennis Wixon of the USC School of Cinematic Arts and an independent evaluation team from Augenblick, Palaich and Associates. Key development partners include game designers from FutureBound, a company that grew out of Pullias' online suite of games, and social media experts from MTV's Get Schooled Foundation. Dissemination and implementation will be facilitated through a partnership with the California Student Aid Commission and Cal-SOAP affiliates.

# TECH USE: TEENS

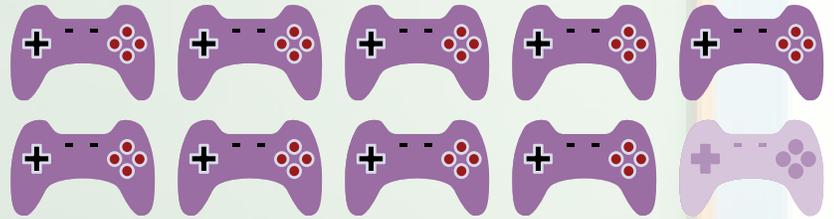
6% exchange email daily.

81% of online teens use some kind of social media.

95% are active online.



59% who use social media talk about education topics online.



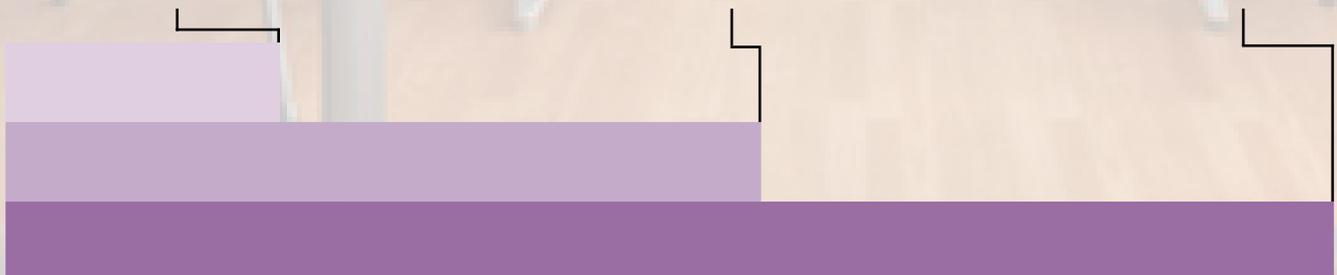
91% of youth (2 - 17 years) play video games.

# TECH USE: TEACHERS

21% in high-income schools said that lack of access to digital technologies is an issue for their students.\*

56% in low-income schools said that lack of access to digital technologies is an issue for their students.\*

92% say the Internet has a "major impact" on their ability to access content, resources and materials for teaching.\*



<http://www.pewinternet.org/2013/02/28/how-teachers-are-using-technology-at-home-and-in-their-classrooms/>  
<http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/teens-fact-sheet/>  
<http://www.pewinternet.org/data-trend/teens/social-media/>  
<http://www.cnet.com/news/91-percent-of-kids-are-gamers-research-says/>  
<http://www.edutopia.org/blog/how-teachers-use-technology-mary-beth-hertz>

\* Teachers surveyed taught Advanced Placement (AP) and National Writing Project (NWP).