

The Harvard Crimson

December 09, 2003

College Inches Toward Campus-Wide Facebook

Time frame for completion of online directory still uncertain

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Students looking to indulge their voyeuristic side or simply curious about the identity of a pesky “section-guy” are one step closer to their goals with plans in the works for the creation of a campus-wide online facebook.

Harvard Arts and Sciences Computing (HASCS) is moving ahead with the creation of a facebook, but the time frame of the project remains uncertain.

“It is not a question of do we do this or not. There is a clear interest,” said Director of Residential Computing Kevin S. Davis ’98. “This has been on everyone’s priority list for a long time.”

HASCS is working with College officials and the Undergraduate Council and plans on using existing technology to make an integrated facebook available to undergraduates.

Council president Rohit Chopra ’04 said the prospect of a campus-wide facebook is a victory for students frustrated by the current patchwork of restricted House-based directories.

“This is something students have been talking about for years,” Chopra said.

The development of a campus-wide facebook had previously been stalled by privacy concerns, many of which came to a head last month when Mark E. Zuckerberg ’06 was accused of breaching security and violating copyrights and individual privacy.

Zuckerberg created a website, www.facemash.com, that used identification pictures obtained illicitly from House-based facebookes to rate students’ attractiveness.

In order to ease privacy concerns the College is planning to allow students to “opt-out” of the online facebook.

Davis said a tool implemented this fall that allows students to modify their preferences with regard to the privacy of directory information—like their phone number or e-mail address

—cleared the way for the facebook project.

The council will be involved in the design process and representatives have begun to ask for student input and recommendations based on other schools' online facebook.

“No staff or technical resources have been assigned yet,” said Davis, an indication that students will wait some time for an online facebook available to anyone with a PIN number.