**Overview**

Google’s social media tool offers unique collaboration and control features that make it very compelling for higher education. It also works well with Google’s other applications like Google Drive, YouTube, and others. This document provides an overview of Google+ and how it can be used in higher education. You can learn more about Google+ by clicking on the “+You” link at the top of Google.com.

**Features**

- **Circles** allow you to organize people by dragging and dropping them into labeled groups. For example, instructors could have circles for classes, committees, colleagues, family, and high school friends. The advantage of circles is that you no longer need to share everything with all your “friends.” What you share with your family is not visible to your students.

- **Hangouts** allow you to video chat with up to nine people simultaneously. When you click the green “Start a Hangout” button to the right of your Stream, you can invite friends to join. After the Hangout goes live, other friends will see it in their stream so that they can join if they wish. Note that all participants will need a Google+ account to participate in the Hangout.

- **Sparks** is where Google took their search engine to the next level. It provides recommendations for your interests and allows you to browse topics to find pertinent videos, articles, and photos that you can then share with friends.

- **Pages** are useful tools for organizations, and businesses that operate similarly to Facebook’s fan pages.

- **Stream** is the place to view what your friends are posting. You can toggle between Circles to view what one particular group is posting.

- Upload and perform basic editing to photos that can be tagged and shared with friends.

- Customize your profile, including information about your occupation or location for networking purposes.
Google+ as a Tool for Teaching

- Share web resources, readings, announcements, or ideas to facilitate discussions
- Encourage students to share course-relevant web resources, experiences, photos or videos.
- Use Google+ Hangouts to bring in guest speakers via live video from around the world. Include up to 9 speakers at once and create a virtual panel discussion.
- Schedule regular Google+ Hangouts for a class for virtual office hours and to encourage communication between students
- Utilize Hangouts “extras” to share screens (participants can see what is on your screen – great for PowerPoint presentations or software demonstrations), collaborating on Google docs, and viewing YouTube videos.
- Record a video announcement with Google+ Hangout and share it with your students.
- Upload photos from conferences and presentations in real-time that will show up on students’ stream.

How is Google+ Different from Other Social Media Sites?

- Circles give you more control over who sees what you’re sharing.
- Sparks allows you to share information with friends based on mutual interests.
- There are fewer distractions cluttering the screen, creating a cleaner interface.
- Instead of a “Like” button, Google+ has a “+1 button” for posts that makes it easy to share resources with your students.
- Better privacy controls that allow you to view your own profile as a friend would see it.
- Features a robust mobile application so students can participate in the discussion or Hangout from anywhere with an Apple or Android device.

Ok... Ready to Get Started?

1. **Create an account:** In order to have Google+, you must have a Google account. To set up an account, go to google.com, click “Sign In” in the upper right hand corner and then the red “Sign Up” in the upper right hand corner. Elon students should log into their Gmail account through the Elon website.
2. **Connect with others:** Search for friends via name or email address. Google will also suggest friends for you based on the email addresses saved in your Gmail account (if you have one). Create circles based on groups that make sense for you and drag and drop your people into those circles.
3. **Start posting:** View what your friends are posting on your stream, upload your own content, or search via Sparks for your own contributions. Decide which circles to share your post with to make your exchange productive and meaningful.