

Humanizing Learning

Strategies for Building Instructor Presence and Community in Online Courses

“The student-instructor relationship requires more nurturing and facilitation online.”

(“How the Online Environment Impacts the Instructor Role,” Kent State University)

1. Respond to student queries promptly:
 - Within 24 hours, ideally; if not possible, clearly communicate expectations in syllabus.
2. Post announcements in the LMS:
 - Remind students of upcoming deadlines;
 - Connect course material to relevant news stories, research, etc.;
 - Summarize and offer reflections on online discussions; reference students by name.
3. Reach out to “at risk” students:
 - Use the LMS’ intelligent agents to connect with students who haven’t logged into the course, or are struggling.
4. Use video in targeted ways:
 - Instructor presence: introduce yourself, communicate who you are as a person, and what motivates you about your discipline;
 - Worked examples: demonstrate how to work through difficult concepts/problems.
5. Participate in online discussions:
 - Use Socratic questioning to challenge assumptions, have students support arguments, clarify thinking etc.
 - Aim for “prompt but modest” feedback: too little feedback communicates a lack of instructor presence/interest; too much makes the discussion instructor-focused and can decrease students’ sense of ownership (deNoyelles et al, 2014).
6. Provide timely, formative feedback on activities and assignments.

Resources

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