

KSU CETL

Part-time Faculty Learning Community Teaching Guidebook

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Preparing for the First Week of Class

Michael Perry

This article features tips and techniques designed to help you create a successful first week of class. Based on the reflective practice of a National Board Certified teacher and adjunct college professor, these tips were derived through his self-reflection on what works to set the climate for his class each term.

The Value of Reflection

“By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.” – Confucius¹

I learned the value of reflection in my teaching practice when I attained National Board for Teaching Professional Standards certification in Technology Education. To achieve National Board Certification, a teacher must pass a thorough examination of content knowledge and a reflective analysis of the candidate’s teaching. The process could be equated to passing the Bar for an Attorney or the CPA exam for an Accountant.

It can be difficult and time consuming for teachers to scrutinize their performance, but like any other occupation it is essential for improvement.²

The keys for preparing for the first week of class are derived from my reflective process over my university teaching. These are steps that I have discovered to help create a smooth beginning for the semester course and set a positive climate in my classroom.

Your Keys to Success

- Create Structure in your classroom.
- Organize the course in terms of learning modules (units of study) and pacing of the material.

¹ "Why Teachers Need to Reflect," Administrate, March 02, 2017, 1, accessed April 25, 2017, <https://www.getadministrate.com/blog/the-need-for-reflection-when-teaching/>.

² "Why Teachers Need to Reflect," Administrate, March 02, 2017, 2, accessed April 25, 2017, <https://www.getadministrate.com/blog/the-need-for-reflection-when-teaching/>

- Set expectations for the course and your students.
- Personalize your teaching. You are not teaching material, but instead you are teaching students.

Structure

Create Structure in your classroom:

1. Begin with your syllabus. Your department will probably supply a syllabus for the class you are assigned to teach. This is a great starting point for you to prepare the course. As you read through the syllabus, make changes that reflect your teaching style and personality in the supplied template.
2. Make a list of assignments for the course. This is a great document to share with your students. I use a table format showing the assignment name, brief description, opening date, due date and points.
3. Create a pacing guide for the course. Make a list of all class meeting and list the topics for each of class, note assignment due dates and study materials for students. Show this in a weekly format. This is another document that works well in a table format. This is a suggested pacing guide and it needs to clearly state that it is subject to change at the professor's discretion during the term.
4. Download or get a roster of your students for the course. Use this along with your assignment list to organize your gradebook for the term. Do this step just prior to the first class as there will be changes through drop/add so it pays to wait until right before class starts. Remember that your roster will change until drop/add is finished usually the first week of class. Your roster will still change with drops until the withdrawal date near mid-term.
5. Procedures and routines that you establish at the beginning of the term are helpful in your success as an instructor and for your student's success in the course. For example, have assignments due at a certain date and time like Friday at 9:30pm. This keeps you and the student from having to look up what day or time an assignment is due.
 - a. Set a standard to answer email within 24 hours during the week.
 - b. Provide a phone number and hours that you can be reached at that number.

- c. Set office hours if that is applicable for your teaching. If teaching online set virtual office hours instead.
 - d. Establish a grading timeline when you will return scored assignments after the due date.
6. Plan for the first night. Cover what you think is essential to introduce the course, but do not read the syllabus to the students. Instead use an icebreaker technique to get to know the students and to get them to know each other.
 7. Review class expectations on the first night. Explain what you think is important to know. You will need to repeat this in brief at the start of the second week because rosters are not set during a drop/add period.
 8. Do not schedule an assignment to be due until after this drop/add period.

Organize

Prepare your course management template to organize your material for students to easily find the necessary information.

1. Create a start here tab. Place your syllabus, pacing guide, assignment list here.
2. Create a get to know the instructor document. Tell the students about you. Remember not to just list your professional info – degrees, publications, professional interests, but also tell them about yourself. Talk about your hobbies, interests, passions and family. They need to see you as a total person not just your professional position.
3. Put the Instructor document in the Start here tab on the course system management main page.
4. Create an assignments tab with a link on the main page. Each assignment should have a project sheet that tells the student what to do and a grade rubric to show them how it will be scored. Standardizing the format of these two items will help you as an instructor, but more importantly will help your students be successful in the course.
5. Organize your class in terms of learning units or modules. Place a link to these on the main page.

Expectations

1. Prepare a presentation on how to be successful in class. Put in your expectations for the students.
 - a. Class Attendance – how absences are handled, roll taken, leaving early
 - b. Preparation – what is expected of students prior to each class
 - c. Participation – how is participation encouraged or rated
 - d. Distractions – phones, texting, surfing, headphones in class
 - e. Contact – how to reach the instructor and the response time
 - f. Communication method – how you will communicate with them
 - g. Daily Communication Check – check your email daily and discussion board daily
 - h. Email & Class Discussion Boards – what to email the instructor about and what to discuss on class discussion boards

Personalize

1. Remember what Brian Tracy said – **“Students don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.”**
2. Get to know your students and have them get to know each other. Use a blog with comments or discussion board post that has them write about themselves. Encourage students to comment on each other’s post. Be sure to moderate the comments to create a positive atmosphere. Include yourself in commenting positively on these posts.
3. Encourage students to form teams or study groups early in the term. This is a great tool to help them achieve success in most courses and reinforces how to work together on projects in school and beyond.
4. Liven up lectures with class discussions that begin with open ended questions. Share some personal experiences that relate to your curriculum, but avoid politics and divisive subjects. Your classroom is not a forum to preach your beliefs or views to your students.

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Creating a Positive Experience in the Classroom

Kelly A. Luscre, Ed.D

Introduction

Research by Allred (2008) indicates that motivating students and encouraging engagement is not an easy feat for instructors. While much of the motivation is intrinsic to the student, instructors play a vital role and can be proactive in cultivating a positive experience. When instructors show enjoyment of and confidence in their teaching, Stephens (2015) showed that it positively impacts their affective orientation towards their students. Finally, positive relationships between students and instructors are associated with emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement in the class (2015).

Imel (2013) gives many suggestions for creating a learning environment that fosters a sense of support for and partnership with adults including the following:

1. Make Learning Relevant
2. Create a Classroom Code of Conduct - Norms
3. Engage Positive Role Models – Be Positive
4. Incorporate Group Work
5. Incorporate group work
6. Break the Traditional Classroom Routine
7. Use Humor
8. Support Opportunities for Individual Problem Solving

Make Learning Relevant

Students are more engaged in learning and retain knowledge better when they see that it is relevant and vital to their own success and happiness.

Create a Classroom Code of Conduct – Create Norms for the Classroom

A positive and productive classroom requires a common understanding of positive and negative behaviors. To establish this understanding, teachers ask students to identify the ways they like to be treated. This discussion elicits lists of behaviors that are respectful, fair, kind, and empathetic.

Engage Positive Role Models and Always Be Positive

Perhaps the most important strategy, yet often the most difficult to carry out, is to be positive. There is always a positive way to respond to a situation. A positive attitude is the change agent that will create positive classrooms and schools that produce happy and successful students.

Capitalize on the first session

First impressions are frequently lasting ones. The first session should create the foundation for a healthy learning partnership and set the tone for the balance of the program. Consider informal furniture arrangements with chairs in a circle or around a table and allow time for introductions, including information about the instructor. Even if the first session is devoted to needs assessment and discussing learner expectations for the course, provide written information about the course. Assignments should be discussed at the outset with the promise of a complete syllabus (incorporating learner input) at the next session.

Incorporate group work

Well-designed group work can contribute to the development of a collaborative, participatory learning environment in which the instructor is perceived as a partner. Small group activities foster the development of positive peer relationships among learners, which frequently have a much greater influence on learning than teacher-learner relationships. Informal, spontaneous groups can be used for short-term activities such as brainstorming; groups can also be formed around ongoing projects. Formal, ongoing groups often result in stronger affiliation among members of the small group; than among members of the whole class.

Break the traditional classroom routine

Deviating from the conventional practices associated with classrooms can help create an effective adult learning environment.

Use humor

Humor, which must be incorporated into regular classroom activities, can free creative capacities by providing novelty and helping learners break out of ruts. Humor can also help learners see the "human" side of the instructor. For example, by laughing at their own mistakes, instructors can help learners understand that errors are a normal part of the learning process. It goes without saying that instructors should never resort to sarcasm or ridicule for then humor becomes destructive.

Support opportunities for individual problem solving

Adults have many responsibilities besides that of learner and consequently may feel a sense of isolation in their student role. If appropriate, instructors can encourage the formation of study groups to link those learners who may wish this type of support. Instructors should be available for individual conferences.

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Motivating Students

Rebecca Robinson

Introduction

Understanding what motivates students can improve instructors' effectiveness. Instructors are probably aware that students are not all motivated solely by an interest in learning; grades, status, the perceived utility of the subject matter, and so forth are also factors that influence students' efforts in coursework. Faculty members are well served by considering the two types of motivations described below and what they can do to promote the first, intrinsic motivation, or the desire to learn for the sake of learning.

Intrinsic motivation is interest in the subject (students might see it as a calling), including its relevance to the world, and the feeling of accomplishment in mastering it. The advantages of intrinsic motivation, which is promoted through student learning rather than rewards and punishments, are that it may be long lasting and self-sustaining. Disadvantages include the following: efforts to foster it may require lengthy preparation and myriad approaches to identify students' interests and using these interests to reach them. It helps if the instructor is interested in the subject, too.

Extrinsic motivation includes other people's expectations of the student (perhaps those of the parents and/or mentor), the extent to which the course offers marketable skills, and grades. The advantages are that, because extrinsic motivation is likely to modify behavior, course preparation requires little effort or consideration of individual students and their interests. Disadvantages of extrinsic motivation include student distractions, short-term effects, devising appropriate punishments/rewards, and the potential necessity of escalating punishments/rewards.

Different Types of Learners

Deep learners: intrinsically motivated to master the subject. These students are engaged in the course for the sake of learning.

Strategic learners: extrinsically motivated by rewards (i.e. grades); competitive but unlikely to deeply engage with the material unless they perceive an associated reward for doing so; and memorize material for exams and promptly forget it afterwards. Devise assignments that require students to synthesize material to enhance strategic learners' accumulation of knowledge.

Surface learners: avoid failure but also deep learning; these learners complete minimum requirements. Help them gain confidence in their ability to learn and scaffold material so it becomes progressively more complex.

Encouraging Intrinsic Motivation

A student will engage a subject if they perceive it as interesting. If not, the student will engage with it if it is stimulating and the student feels personally in control of the engagement. Over time, with adequate stimulation and control, the student might find the subject interesting; without stimulation and control, the student will find it uninteresting.

Other Tips on Encouraging Intrinsic Motivation

1. Have realistic expectations and set achievable goals.
2. De-emphasize grades with other types of feedback (e.g. ungraded drafts).
3. Assign assessment tools that are neither too difficult nor too easy.
4. Help students find personal meaning/value in the material.
5. Encourage active participation.
6. Avoid competition among students.
7. Focus tests on conceptual mastery rather than facts and terminology.

Getting Students to Read

1. Not all courses need a text. Consider compiling articles in lieu of ordering a text.
2. Less is more: try not to overwhelm students with large reading assignments.
3. Material should be accessible to "marginally-skilled" students.
4. Explain relevance of reading materials.
5. Select contemporary materials.
6. Use reading guides, study questions, and short writing assignments to encourage reading.
7. Have students present on materials.
8. Anonymous classroom assessment techniques (surveys of how much of the reading students completed).

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Tips on Motivating Students

Rebecca Robinson and Katia Lord

The following tips may help you motivate students to succeed in your course:

Course Design

1. Design courses that capitalize on students' needs (skill building, curiosity, success, challenge, reward, et cetera) and interests.
2. Set realistic performance goals.
3. Be explicit about what students need to do to succeed.
4. Connect materials to local examples, outside interests, social lives, current events, pop culture, and/or social media.
5. Identify and help students understand how the skills they learn are transferable/marketable.
6. Course material should appeal to multiple learning styles (see above).

Course Delivery

1. Review the learning objectives so students know what to expect.
2. Plan for every class.
3. Arrange desks in a U-shape to encourage interaction.
4. Move around, be expressive, and vary your pitch while lecturing.
5. Give examples, including real-world examples, with which students can relate.
6. Maintain eye contact with students while they are speaking to let them know that you are listening.
7. Break the lesson plan into 15-20 minute intervals to hold students' attention.

Teaching Techniques

1. Use various instructional strategies: lectures, demonstrations, discussions, case studies, groups, et cetera.
2. Use student-active teaching strategies: learning through discovery, cooperative group learning, role-playing, debate, simulations, symposia, press conferences, et cetera.
3. Use supportive teaching style: listening, offering praise and empathy, and being responsive to questions.

Learning Environment

1. Create an open, positive learning environment.

2. Make yourself available before/after class.
3. Learn your students' names.
4. Reward strengths and strengthen limitations.
5. Be consistent in your treatment of students.
6. Make students feel like they are valuable members of this learning environment.
7. Use representations that are not stereotypical or deconstruct stereotypes.
8. Include readings that offer a multitude of gender, racial, and ethnic perspectives.
9. Use gender-neutral language.
10. Ask student with disabilities or those from non-English-speaking backgrounds how you can assist them.

Student Feedback

1. Return assignments/tests as soon as possible with praise/constructive criticism.
2. Tie assignments to learning objectives and make sure exams are accurate and reliable.
3. Strategize with students who are struggling.
4. Avoid threatening grades to improve performance (may contribute to plagiarism and late work).
5. Outline specific grading rubric for assignments.
6. Provide study guides.
7. Give students opportunities to practice before graded assessments (e.g. practice tests).
8. Let students assess themselves.
9. Test early and often to reduce the number of high-point value assessments.
10. Offer extra credit or opportunities to earn back points.

Student Autonomy/Input

1. Give student control over their education.
2. Encourage students to share their comments to assess the extent to which they have grappled with and understood the materials.
3. Provide opportunities for students to speak and present materials.
4. Involve students in teaching/planning--get feedback!
5. Encourage a sense of student autonomy (e.g. selection of group members, offer assignment options, get their input on grading and assignments, et cetera).
6. Let students think for themselves (do not give them answers--ask them to build on what they know).
7. Facilitate the identification of role and peer models.
8. Use the phrases: "I think you will find" or "I'm interested in your reactions to..."
9. Ask students what makes classes more or less motivating.
10. Ask students what they would like to discuss from the readings.

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Making Assessment Choices

Dr. Diana Gilmer Echols

Introduction

Making assessment choices is a very important aspect of the teaching profession. When assessments are used properly, they can make a significant difference in student performance by providing various opportunities to evaluate student achievement of learning goals and objectives. In addition, assessments can be used to measure mastery of tasks and understanding of concepts, serve as a mechanism to communicate strengths and development opportunities for students, encourage and motivate students, etc. Because of this, it is very important that faculty allow for various ways to assess to student performance. Purposes of assessments and the need to balance assignment types will be covered in this section.

1. Purpose of Assessments

2. Balance of Assignments

Purpose of Assessments

There are two main types of assessments that can occur within a learning environment referred to as formative and summative assessments. Formative Assessments can be thought of as checkpoints throughout the learning process where student mastery of learning goals are assessed.

Formative assessments are opportunities to evaluate students' development and should include a wide range of activities throughout a class. A typical class should have objective and subjective assignments that are delivered as papers, presentations, exercises, and in class interactive activities. The main point here is to avoid using one assignment type throughout a class, such as papers.

Formative assessments can also include non-graded assignments when development of knowledge is the main goal. For this, classroom assessment techniques (CAT) are great tools. Click on the link <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/cft/guides-sub-pages/cats/> for examples of CAT assessments.

Summative assessments afford educators an opportunity to evaluate student mastery of course outcomes which necessitate these types of assignments occurring at milestones in the course (i.e. midterms and finals). Final assignments that measure learning outcomes are the most appropriate ones for summative assessments and can be any assignment type.

Balance of Assignments

Students learn best when they are engaged, supported, and challenged. With this in mind, assignment balance is a must. Assignment balance is a supportive concept that advances the idea that assignment variation is needed in a single course. Assignments should allow for practical application, inquiry, and creation.

- Bloom's taxonomy is a great framework to use to help develop assignments that are structured to achieve differing levels of rigor
- Some assignments should include an opportunity for mindfulness that allows for a deeper understanding of a concept
- Practice opportunities are encouraged when feasible in a course for high-stake assignments

- Use various assignment types such as case studies, discussions, projects, papers, gaming, portfolio development, multimedia activities, group assignments, objective exams, and more. Select the best assignment types that allow for effective demonstration of outcome achievement.
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Grading Resources/Practices

Dr. Diana Gilmer Echols

Introduction: Rubrics

Grading rubrics are tools used to help faculty evaluate student performance formatively and summatively by qualifying and quantifying various levels of mastery on gradable assignments. Assignment component requirements are identified and assigned a score based on the level of performance which makes evaluating performance a more consistent activity.

- Goals of the grading rubric
- Types of grading rubrics
- Points to consider when developing rubric

Goals of the grading rubric

1. To qualify and quantify levels of mastery on student performance
2. To establish greater objectivity when grading assignments
3. Streamline the grading process
4. Provide clarity regarding assignment component weight
5. Provide guidance to students through clarity of criteria

Types of Grading Rubrics

There are various types of grading rubrics. Faculty are encouraged to use the grading rubric type that is most appropriate for the assignment to be graded. Faculty have the freedom to adjust the rubrics into components or tasks that allow them to stress the most important aspects to an assignment.

- There are grading rubrics for papers
- There are grading rubrics for projects
- There are grading rubrics for presentations
- There are grading rubrics for class participation

Examples of each rubric type can be retrieved from the following website.

<http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/design/teach/rubrics.html>

Points to consider when developing a grading rubric

When crafting a grading rubric there are a few things to keep in mind that contribute to the effectiveness of the grading rubric and should not be taken lightly.

These considerations include:

- The purpose of the rubric- is the rubric purposed to assess student performance or to provide guidance for assignment completion?

- The tasks of the assignments
- Most important components of the assignment
- Weight of each component
- Grading scale to be used
- Desired language for the rubric (quantify when possible)
- Be specific when possible

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PROMOTING ACADEMIC HONESTY

Stephen A. White

Introduction

When it comes to promoting academic honesty it is best to employ all available resources at your disposal. Whether it be a strong deterrent by rule of law, or a clever method of preventing cheating or making it more difficult, or even a resolve to provide more resources and encouragement and positive reinforcement so as to lessen the temptation to engage in dishonesty.

The following is a partial list of suggestions for promoting academic honesty in general: [Taken from Tools for Teaching by B.G.Davis 2nd edition p.345ff]

DEVELOPING AND GIVING EXAMS

Change exam questions as often as possible

Keep searching to find new and fresh sources of exam questions. Students, graduate students, other instructors, yourself, online sources, and even professional organizations like the ACS (American Chemical Society) etc. just to name a few.

For multiple-choice exams, use multiple versions

Change the order of the questions and/or the exam pages. Signify different versions by different colored cover sheets.

Safeguard your exams

Keep all exam types and versions safe, secure, and locked in a place that only you have access to. Do not return exams or quizzes to the students, post grades instead. Never email exams and never put exams on the internet.

Proctor the exam

You can do this yourself but the more proctors you have the less likely the students are to cheat, even the hard core cheaters. If available use certified or trained proctors that know what to look for. TA's or student assistants can be used also especially if the students don't know them and they appear official as in wearing a coat or tie. The bottom line is the more warm bodies you have there as proctors, the less cheating will occur.

Seat students randomly

If possible impose a seating scheme that will separate people as much as possible. In a lab setting use barriers of paper or cardboard to prevent students from seeing across from each other. Also maximize the space between students who are seated next to each other.

In large classes, check student IDs

Include in your syllabus that you may check student IDs against class rolls to ensure that everyone takes their own exam. If the class is too large to check photo IDs or if you simply don't want to, a candid photo of the

whole class at the start of the exam can be used to check for ringers among the students in the class. Check first to verify if this photo is allowed.

Keep a seating chart.

Hand out exams by exam # so that student names, scantron sheets and exam #s can all be easily correlated. Scantrons are very useful if giving multiple choice tests, because the scantron data for the whole class can be used to detect cheating patterns among students that have different versions of the test.

Ban all electronic devices, except those needed for the exam.

Mobile phones, PDAs, and programmable watches and pens can be used to hold, access, communicate, or disseminate information. Some faculty bring a large clock to class or write "time remaining" on the board and ask students to remove their watches and put them in their pockets. If students are allowed to use calculators, try to make certain that the memories are cleared before students begin the exam. Some faculty require students to buy a specific type of calculator so that students using unapproved devices are easy to spot. Do not post any answer keys or explanations on the Web until after the exam—dishonest students have used mobile phones to ask friends to download answers from the Web and text message them during the exam. (Source: Whitley and Keith-Spiegel, 2002)

Take action if you observe inappropriate behavior

Don't let academic misconduct go unchecked. If you notice "wandering eyes," whisper a warning to the student (i.e. "You may not realize this, but your behavior makes it appear as if you are looking at another person's test") or direct the student to another seat. If you observe cheating, position yourself near the offenders to discourage them. Or make a general public announcement: "Please do your own work." If you have suspicions about students, allow them to complete the exam, take notes on what you observe, and flag the exam for close review. (Sources: Cizek, 1999; McKeachie and Svinicki, 2006)

Ask students to sign their exams indicating that the work is their own. Some faculty have students write, sign, and date the following statement: "I have neither given nor received help on this exam."

Maintain order when students turn in their exams at the end of the period.

Require students to sign an attendance sheet when they turn in their exams, or collect exams from the students row by row. Count those present and make certain that the number of examinees matches the number of exams—this will prevent students who did not submit an exam from claiming that they did and that the exam was later lost or misplaced.

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Delivering an Online Course

Selena Patterson

Introduction

In order to be able to teach an online course at KSU, the requirement is to enroll in the online certification training course. The training course teaches online course design and development. This article delves more into how to deliver your online course to your students. Here you will find information on getting started at the beginning of the semester and how to set the stage for your course.

Keep connected with students! Use the technology of the online environment to help you keep in touch with students. Communicate frequently with students, both individually and as a group.

- Set the tone
- Instructor Presence
- Promote and Guide Online Discussions
- Course Management, Expectations and Clarity
- Resource for online instructors at KSU

Set the Tone

Each student enters an online class with different assumptions, skills, expectations, and attitudes about online learning. Therefore, it's important to give students some time to get comfortable in the new learning environment.

Consider starting your course with Week 1. In this introductory week, you will set the tone for the online course, clarify course expectations, establish guidelines for participation, model appropriate online communication, create rapport with students, and let everyone in the course get to know each other and get familiar with the course site and the technology tools.

Ideas for the Course Introduction

[Make the online course syllabus publicly available](#)

Well before the deadline to sign up for courses. Knowing in advance what to expect, for example, regular web conferencing sessions or several face-to-face meetings, will help students plan their semester accordingly.

[Email a welcome note before the semester begins](#)

Introduce yourself. Include information about the course, required course materials, and instructions on getting started. Use a personal and conversational tone. The students should feel you are a real person.

[Create the instructor contact page](#)

Post your picture, bio, or a video. Share your interests and hobbies.

[Instruct students to introduce each other](#)

via a Blackboard Learn blog, discussion forum, or a live online session. Try to **establish individual contact with each student** during the first week by making a comment on the students' posts.

Use a scavenger hunt as a course orientation activity

Familiarize students with the course syllabus and the online learning environment. Give tasks that will teach students how to navigate the course, participate in course interactions, and try out the tools that they will be using in the online course.

Give students an individual data sheet or a getting-to-know-you survey

Through this activity, you will clarify your assumptions about your students. Why are they here? Are they new to online learning? What do they already know?

Create a video course tour

Offer a review of course expectations.

Use an ice-breaker

Give students an opportunity to share personal information about each other.

Follow up

Via announcements, individual and class emails for clarification and encouragement.

Instructor Presence

It's important that the students know you are there to guide them along the way. Make yourself known and stay present throughout the course.

Some ways to make yourself known and present in the course:

- Login and monitor the course activity regularly by checking to see who has been participating in discussions, logging in, and completing assignments.
- Post announcements and messages on a regular basis. Topics may include reminders, course updates, an upcoming event, a weekly class recap, and comments on the news relevant to the course topic, or a picture from a trip to a conference.
- Provide feedback when necessary. Students like the engagement.
- Post once a week a recap message or video as a way to provide a weekly review of the course and give group feedback to the class. As well as a way to humanize yourself.
- Offer online office hours – through a D2L/ Blackboard chat room or a live online session. Be sure you keep your meeting virtual because it is an unfair advantage to meet with a student in person when there may be some students who live out of state. Keep it fair by making meetings virtual or through a phone call.

Promote and Guide Discussions

As the instructor, it is important to provide space and encouragement for continuous 'conversation' that supports cognitive processes. Model what you are asking your students to do, so be sure to add/post/create just as they are doing. Then, reply to students' posts and welcome them individually to make that initial connection.

- Ask a Trivia question related to a concept to get students engaged
- Post a link in the discussion forum to a current event and or article that relates to course content and ask for feedback
- Provide opportunities for discussion, maybe a thought-provoking question to elicit student discussions.
- Including opportunities for collaboration, such as group projects and team discussions that ask students to explore the world around them.

- Offer a poll where you ask students' opinions on something related to the course and or topic (this can be really fun!).
- Mention the Student Corner ("commons area" for off-topic discussions) and offer some guidance on the purpose. (This engagement is extracurricular but it can help students build relationships that are advantageous inside the classroom.

Course Management, Expectations and Clarity

Managing an online class takes of time and effort. Here are some strategies, techniques, and tips courtesy of Deliver Online Course. (2010). Retrieved March 15, 2017, from <https://oit.utk.edu/instructional/strategies/toolkit/course-design/Pages/deliver.aspx> that will help you manage the course and the course load.

Set your rules of communication with students early and stick to them. Set your rules such as the timeline for assessment and feedback, time to respond to student emails, and when you plan to be online and visit the course site (e.g., turn-around time for responses to students' questions: M-F: 24 hrs, S-Su: 48 hrs; feedback on submitted paper: one week; best way to communicate: email and/or IM). Your students will hold realistic and reasonable expectations of your presence in the online course. Besides, you will be a good role model for online participation by setting and following the rules.

Inform students about added resources and other changes to the course through the Announcement tool. Mark the newly posted materials as posted 'date'.

Practice proactive course management strategies such as monitoring assignments, communicating regularly, sending reminders about missed or upcoming deadlines, and making course adjustments.

Spend more time on planning and designing the course to reduce the time spent on dealing with logistical issues during the class.

Create a class schedule with critical information for students: assignments, due dates, links to more info/tools, and points.

Include the information in one place only. For example, don't post the assignment due dates both in the syllabus and the assignment instructions. If you need to change the dates, you would have to edit them twice.

Create and introduce a Roadmap to Success – a document of student expectations, responsibilities and accountability for learning, and student help resources.

Rely on peer feedback and self-assessment to reduce the need for instructor feedback and instructor assessment. **Teach students how to give effective peer feedback.**

Provide rubrics, samples of assignments, and instructions for completing assignments.

Create the "Q&A" or "Ask the class" forum. Instruct students to ask the instructor private questions in an email, other questions – in the forum.

Create a "Student To-Do list" for each week – include clear directions and all materials needed.

Take advantage of the filter in your email system. Set a filter to place the emails from students in your course to a specific folder. Instruct students on the email protocol such as a specific subject line and types of questions.

Set weekly course tasks and reminders on your calendar.

Resource on KSU Campus for Online Instructors:

Distant Learning Center:

This center is a great place to start in terms of resources for your personal growth and knowledge as an online instructor. They often have lunch and learn meetings about different topics within online teaching. You can also schedule meetings or send emails anytime if you need clarity or guidance on any online teaching issues.

<http://distancelearning.kennesaw.edu/support/content-tools.php>

<http://distancelearning.kennesaw.edu/>

References:

Deliver Online Course. (2010). Retrieved April 12, 2017,

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Social Presence and Interaction in the Online Classroom | Center for Teaching & Learning. (2003). Retrieved

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