

## INTRODUCTION

“Contact between students and faculty in and outside of class is critical for student engagement because it influences student motivation and involvement.” (Dunlap and Lowenthal, 2009). The time and effort you spend invested in your course will be worth the payoff in student learning and satisfaction.

## A CLOSER LOOK

Like teaching in a face-to-face setting, teachers vary considerably in the methods and degrees to which they choose to develop connections with students. While it is largely a matter of style, experience and scholarship indicate that students log in more frequently and produce more high-quality work in online courses in which instructors are frequently and truly interactive. Here are some ways to be interactive with your students (separated into a few categories):

### **Solid interactive practices:**

- Create an intro/welcome video about you and your course  
**Note:** Our Media team is happy to help you!
- Include an introductory icebreaker assignment for students in the first week of the course, and post and participate yourself
- Post on the “News” section periodically about course content
- Personalize communications with students by using their names in feedback and email
- Respond promptly to student questions
- Conduct weekly office hours when you are available for chat, telephone, or web conference
- Check in every day (or nearly so)
- Make full use of the Storybook Plus Video Player: using the notes section, including links to other resources, including quiz questions, and including embedded videos
- Offer **timely**, detailed feedback for all student work

Research says...

“When students did not believe the faculty were fully engaged in the course, the perception of academic quality diminished”

- Armstrong, 2011

### **Moving to even greater interaction:**

- Participate in student discussion forums on occasion
- Use the “News” page as a blog (include some personal anecdotes and connect course content to broader issues in the industry or in the news), or link students to a blog you keep outside of D2L. **Note:** See the [News Page](#) Tip Sheet!
- Create discussion forums in which you ask questions – and enable and encourage students to ask questions
- Include audio clips or podcasts (with your voice) as an alternative to student’s reading course content on the screen, and in feedback you offer for student work
- Don’t wait until the end of the course to find out what students think of assignments or activities - use survey(s) in D2L to collect student feedback on them as you go



### **Approaching the gold standard of interaction:**

- Require each student (or groups of students) to have a short web conference with you in the first two weeks of the course
  - Provide students with tips on ways of self-motivating – and soliciting tips from them
  - Include visuals and videos that tie into the content pages, in the “News” blurbs you post, and in the feedback you give students on their work
- Note:** Images and/or videos of you or taken by you that highlight course content can be especially meaningful, if of excellent quality
- Require self-assessment as part of major assessments—and offer feedback on the self-assessment as well as the assessment itself
- Note:** Your instructional designer can be a great resource here!
- Use Twitter or other social media to facilitate student connection to broader themes in the field of study move beyond “the structure of an LMS or the timing of a semester” (See *Dunlap and Lowenthal*)
  - Mentor students by suggesting areas for more research, internships, and job opportunities
  - Engage in discussions with other online instructors for their best tips for how to be interactive with students

## **EXAMPLE**

Here is a “News” posting used in a course that is notable in how it connects students to broader industry awareness and encourages thought about the professional future.

**Wisconsin Hospitals 2014 Quality Report** ▾

Posted Feb 13, 2015 4:51 PM

Students,

The Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) just released its 2014 report on Quality. It is not required reading, but you may wish to peruse it to see the type of information that is collected and reported to the WHA. Participating in this in some manner will likely be an aspect of your future role.

<http://www.wha.org/pdf/WHA2014QualityReport.pdf>

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## **REFERENCES**

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